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Citizenship and  
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# IMMIGRATION CONSULTATIONS REPORT



Canada





Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada

# **IMMIGRATION CONSULTATIONS REPORT**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>I. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A. Defining the Issues .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>B. Working Groups .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>C. Federal/Provincial Bilateral Meeting .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>D. The Public Consultations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>E. Consultations with Citizenship and Immigration Staff .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>F. The National Conference .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>G. The Results .....</b>	<b>13</b>
 <b>II. WHAT WE HEARD .....</b>	 <b>15</b>
 <b>Issue 1 - A Vision of Canada .....</b>	 <b>16</b>
<b>A. Should we have immigration? .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>B. Immigration and population .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>C. Immigration and diversity .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>D. Vision of Canada .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>(a) How we see ourselves .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>(b) Our vision for the Canada of the future .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>E. Immigration and our vision of Canada .....</b>	<b>22</b>
 <b>Issue 2 - Criteria for Selection .....</b>	 <b>24</b>
<b>A. What is our priority? .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>B. What should our criteria be? .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>C. What about the family class? .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>D. The selection process .....</b>	<b>30</b>
 <b>Issue 3 - Humanitarian Obligations .....</b>	 <b>31</b>
<b>A. How many refugees and humanitarian cases should we be accepting? .....</b>	<b>32</b>

B.	Overseas process for refugee selection .....	32
C.	The in-land refugee status determination process .....	34
D.	What about those involved in the process? .....	36
E.	What is the best way to meet our obligations? .....	37
F.	Are we taking adequate care of women and children? .....	38
<b>Issue 4 - International Cooperation .....</b>		<b>38</b>
<b>Issue 5 - Integration .....</b>		<b>41</b>
A.	Who should be responsible for integration costs? .....	42
B.	What can be done to improve immigrant integration? .....	43
C.	Integration - a two-way process .....	47
<b>Issue 6 - Improved Coordination .....</b>		<b>48</b>
A.	Integrating immigration policies with labour force policies .....	48
B.	Integrating immigration policies with public service policies .....	51
<b>Issue 7 - Protecting Canadian Society .....</b>		<b>53</b>
A.	What about health and immigration? .....	53
B.	How can the safety of Canadians be protected? .....	55
	(a) Control measures .....	55
	(b) Enforcement measures .....	58
C.	What about protecting Canadian institutions? .....	61

<b>Issue 8 - Economic Benefits . . . . .</b>	<b>62</b>
A.    Selecting immigrants - better criteria and programs . . . . .	63
(a)    General . . . . .	63
(b)    Independent immigration . . . . .	64
(c)    Recruiting and promotion . . . . .	65
(d)    Business immigration . . . . .	65
(e)    Foreign workers . . . . .	67
(f)    Foreign students . . . . .	68
(g)    Family class . . . . .	68
B.    Level & mix - What is the optimum? . . . . .	69
C.    Immigrant distribution & mobility . . . . .	70
 <b>Issue 9 - Partnerships . . . . .</b>	 72
A.    Partnerships within the federal government . . . . .	72
B.    Partnerships with provincial governments . . . . .	72
C.    Partnerships with other levels of government . . . . .	74
D.    Partnerships outside government . . . . .	75
 <b>Issue 10 - Research and Development . . . . .</b>	 75
A.    Informing the public about immigration . . . . .	75
B.    What about other uses for immigration data? . . . . .	76
(a)    Policy formulation . . . . .	76
(b)    Service provision . . . . .	77
(c)    Enforcement . . . . .	78
C.    What needs to be done? . . . . .	78
 <b>III.    KEY MESSAGES . . . . .</b>	 79



## I. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

With the announcement of the 1994 immigration levels plan in February 1994, the Honourable Sergio Marchi, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, simultaneously launched new public consultations on immigration. The initiative was unique both in substance and in scope. With the help of Canadians, the objective was to forge a comprehensive, forward-looking and progressive immigration policy framework to take Canada into the next century. The results of these consultations would help shape a strategic framework set out in the document, **Into the 21st Century - A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship**.

The consultations reflected the Government's commitment both to include and to involve Canadians in shaping their future. Recognizing the public interest in immigration issues and that all Canadians have a stake in this area of public policy, the consultations reached out in a way that had not been done before. They also moved beyond the simple exchange of information between government and its citizens: they engaged Canadians in a discussion of **shared goals** and **shared responsibilities**.

The immigration consultations were situated within a context of building and securing Canada's future. As the world was changing in significant and complex ways, the challenges facing the management of Canada's immigration program were considerable. What was required was a comprehensive, innovative and long-term plan for immigration - a plan responsive to rapidly changing circumstances, both within Canada and outside our borders. Furthermore, the plan needed to reflect our compassion and our sense of fairness. In as much as immigration has contributed to the development of all that Canada is today, so too should the immigration program of today contribute to the growth and development of the Canada we wish to become.

The consultations were guided by two fundamental principles. First, to engage Canadians in an informed and constructive discussion of immigration issues. This meant that the facts about immigration had to be readily accessible to those who wanted to participate and that the issues had to be presented in a way that would encourage thoughtful reflection and comment.

Second, to reach out more broadly to Canadians. In addition to consulting with the traditional stakeholders of immigration, there had to be a considerate and sincere effort to involve Canadians who had not had an opportunity to participate in immigration consultations in the past. In short, mechanisms were needed to ensure that people who wished to participate in the consultative process, could do so.

The 1994 Immigration Consultations were designed to engage a broad spectrum of Canadians in a discussion that would help shape a long-term strategy for

immigration policy. What in fact ensued, was a national debate on the objectives of immigration, the domestic and international challenges facing Canada and the role that citizenship and immigration should play in our future.

The following pages describe the various mechanisms by which Canadians participated in the 1994 Immigration Consultations.

## **A. Defining the Issues and Identifying the Approach**

The 1994 Immigration Consultations were officially launched with a planning meeting held in Montebello, Quebec in March, organized by the Public Policy Forum. In addition to the Minister and senior departmental officials, thirty individuals from across Canada and abroad, from business, trade unions, the three levels of government, education, social, health, public safety and service agencies participated.

While the broader purpose of this meeting was to explore ways of improving the consultative process, the specific objectives were: (i) to frame a list of key issues which would form the basis of the public consultations leading to the development of a ten-year strategic framework for immigration policy; and (ii) to identify the elements of an approach to consultation which would lead to the most productive discussion of those issues.

Participants agreed that the immigration consultations must both inform Canadians and stimulate broad public debate. They identified ten key issues and argued that the process should involve all the players in immigration, including those who are not supportive of the current levels. Participants were particularly concerned that the consultation process bring together the three levels of government. They added that notwithstanding the federal government's leadership and coordinating role, other outside groups and organizations could have a role in steering the process and in sponsoring public meetings. Finally, they advised that in-depth work begin immediately on the ten issues so that as much ground as possible be covered by November 1994.

There was a judgment among the participants of the Montebello meeting, that the Minister was attempting too much by way of consultation, in too short a time. The Minister agreed that his plan was ambitious. He felt confident, however, that significant progress toward a strategic policy framework for immigration could be made by November 1994.

## **A Word About the Ten Issues**

The ten issues identified by the participants at the Montebello planning meeting were deliberately posed as questions to be answered by the Canadian public at large. They invited Canadians to resolve for themselves the importance of immigration in the building of Canada's future. They also reflected the Minister's commitment to an open and honest consultation process - one in which the agenda was shaped by Canadians themselves.

- 1) What is the vision of Canada that we seek to support through immigration policy?
- 2) What criteria should we set for selecting immigrants in order to achieve our social and economic objectives?
- 3) How should Canada meet its humanitarian obligations toward refugees?
- 4) How can Canada work with other nations to deal with migration pressures?
- 5) How should we help newcomers integrate into Canadian society?
- 6) How do we integrate immigration policies and programs with other policy areas:
  - (a) in labour market and accreditation?
  - (b) in housing, health care, education and policing?
- 7) How should we enforce and maintain the integrity of the immigration program?
- 8) How can we best realize the economic benefits of immigration?
- 9) How do we build partnerships among all levels of government?
- 10) How do we build a common database on immigration to serve public policy and program goals?

## **B. The Working Groups**

Following the recommendations put forward at the Montebello meeting, working groups were charged with the task of examining the ten issues in-depth. The creation of these groups was in keeping with the recommendation that

in-depth work on the ten issues begin immediately to ensure that as much ground as possible was covered by November.

These groups were generally comprised of ten to twenty participants and included representatives from the federal government, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community planners, programmers and service representatives, and in some cases, representatives of provincial and municipal governments. Although they represented a variety of backgrounds and regional perspectives, all participants had a specialized knowledge of or experience in the particular issue they were asked to study.

In all, ten working groups studied nine of the issues originally identified at Montebello. A working group was not specifically tasked with studying issue #1, *a Vision of Canada*, as it was expected that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration would contribute to this issue in their report on Canadian Citizenship. However, issue #6, *the integration of immigration policies with other policy areas*, was subdivided into two distinct areas of study and addressed by two separate working groups.

The working groups met on two or three separate occasions over a period of approximately one and half months. In all, over one hundred and fifty individuals invested considerable time and effort in the examination of the issues through these working groups. Their views, conclusions and recommendations were carefully compiled and submitted as final reports to the Minister in June and July 1994. In late June, the co-convenors met with the Minister to report their major findings and recommendations. The meeting offered the Minister a preview of their results as well as an opportunity for the co-convenors to hear the results of the deliberations of the other groups.

The reports of the working groups reflected a consensus of individuals who often approached the issues from diverging points of view. Their efforts resulted in thoughtful recommendations for the program and contributed a great deal to the substantive discussion of the issues. The reports are available through the Department.

## **C. Federal-Provincial Bilateral Consultation Meetings**

Federal officials held a series of bilateral discussions with provinces throughout the month of May. These meetings explored priorities for federal-provincial cooperation and opportunities for partnership. They were intended to address the most critical issues for each of the respective provinces and to provide updates on current citizenship and immigration initiatives.

A report highlighting the concerns and recommendations raised by the provinces was prepared by the Department and made available to the public. This document also served as working group report on issue #9, *the building of effective partnerships among all levels of government*.

In addition to these bilateral discussions, the first federal-provincial/territorial meeting of Deputy Ministers whose portfolios concern immigration, was organized as a follow-up to these sessions in late July. A second meeting was held in mid-September. Federal-provincial work groups have also been created to deal more effectively with specific areas of federal-provincial cooperation.

## **D. The Public Consultations**

In keeping with the Minister's objective to reach out broadly and engage Canadians in a national discussion of the issues, the strategy for the public consultations was to provide as many opportunities as possible for Canadians to participate in the process, and to ensure that anyone who wished to participate, could do so.

### **(i) The Consultation Kit**

A Consultation Kit was developed at the commencement of the consultation exercise to stimulate discussion and broad participation. It was designed to provide individuals, community groups and organizations with the information and materials necessary to host public consultations in their own communities and to report their conclusions and recommendations to the Minister or to offer their own individual views.

The concept behind the Consultation Kit was to provide sufficient information so as to engage Canadians in a meaningful debate of the issues, but at the same time, not so much information as to overwhelm them and discourage discussion. Further, there was a sincere and concerted effort to present the information honestly and objectively. The components of the Kit included: (i) a Discussion Document which provided basic information on Canada's immigration program, introduced the ten issues identified at Montebello and posed questions to incite discussion; (ii) an Organizer's Guide which offered some basic information and suggestions for hosting a consultation meeting; (iii) a Tabloid which presented a condensed version of the Discussion Document; and (iv) a reporting form to invite and assist Canadians in reporting their views to the Department.

Approximately 13,000 Kits were distributed across Canada to school boards, elected officials, organizations, associations, federations, individuals and any group or person who expressed interest in participating in the process. In addition, approximately 130,000 Tabloids were distributed to schools, libraries, Canada Immigration Centres and Citizenship Courts and to Members of Parliament for distribution to constituents. Tabloids were also distributed at public meetings and at Info Centres located in local retail establishments across the country. The Tabloids offered Immigration Facts and Issues at a glance as well as provided an overview of the issues; they were very popular in these venues.

Both the Kit and the Tabloid encouraged Canadians to submit their views and concerns on any or all of the ten issues. Across the country, many people, including Members of Parliament, organized public meetings in their communities, met with friends and neighbours, assembled the members of their organizations and associations and even deliberated individually on the issues put before them.

More than three hundred written submissions were received by the Department representing the views and recommendations of over 8,000 Canadians. Just over half of the submissions received were from groups, associations or organizations which, in some cases, represented the views of up to hundreds of people. Highlights of the views, concerns and recommendations put forward in those submissions are included in the following section of this report entitled "What We Heard".

## (ii) Public Meetings

Seven "town hall-type" public meetings were held across the country -- Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver -- throughout June, July and August. As was the case with other mechanisms of public consultation, the purpose of these meetings was to **listen** to the views and the concerns of the public. Public meetings, however, afforded the Minister the opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of his commitment to an open and inclusive process by providing Canadians with a public forum in which to direct their comments and questions to the government. Five meetings were initially planned, but interest in other communities resulted in two additional meetings.

The Minister attended four of these meetings, while Mary Clancy, the Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Immigration, represented him at the remaining three. The meetings were generally well publicized and open to anyone wishing to attend.

Most meetings were co-hosted by a community-based non-governmental organization, institution or association. This was in keeping with the advice received at the Montebello planning meeting; outside groups or organizations could play a role in sponsoring and/or steering public meetings. Co-hosts were selected because they were recognized in their communities as credible and effective as well as relatively neutral regarding the subject matter.

Early in the planning stages, it was decided that only two or three of the ten issues could realistically be addressed in a two-to-three hour public meeting. Co-hosts worked in partnership with the Department to determine the program and the format and to ensure that the program accommodated the interests and the concerns of their communities. Co-hosts also identified the moderators, panellists and other invited guests. The result was that each city had its own unique format.

Once the program and format were determined, the co-hosts set about implementing the plan for the meetings, including the local advertising, inviting and confirming the moderators, panellists, and other invited speakers, booking a space for the event, ensuring adequate facilities for media and providing logistical support. Co-hosts were also responsible for developing and implementing a pre-registration process for the event. This process was necessary as there was limited space and seating available. As our obligation in our outreach activities was to provide an opportunity for ordinary Canadians to address the Minister in an open forum, it was important that the composition of the public meetings reflect a balance between the traditional and non-traditional stakeholders.

The format in Vancouver was particularly interesting in that two briefing sessions, co-organized and co-sponsored by NGOs in the Vancouver community, were offered in advance of the meeting. Their purpose was to ensure that participants had the information they needed to engage in an informed discussion of the issues. These sessions were well attended and regional Departmental staff were available to explain immigration processes, answer questions and offer general assistance. To ensure that everyone had an opportunity to express their views at the public meeting, twenty-five trained facilitators lead discussion groups on a number of the issues. This was followed by a plenary session in which the views, concerns, recommendations and questions emerging from the discussion groups were presented to the Minister.

The Department was responsible for inviting, coordinating and responding to the requests of the media. In general, the meetings generated a great deal of interest from the media. In addition, Departmental resource persons were on hand to respond to technical and case-specific questions. This measure was taken in response to the first meeting where there was some difficulty in restraining

participants from asking case-specific questions, rather than addressing the issues for consultation.

Generally speaking, the public meetings were successful. They were well attended and generated a good deal of public interest - in all, over 1,600 Canadians participated. The views, concerns and recommendations expressed at the meetings were compiled and synthesized into a *Report of the Public Meetings*, which was made available for the national conference in September.

### (iii) Study Circles

Throughout the months of June and July, fifty-eight study circles, organized by the Democracy Education Network - an independent, non-profit, educational organization on contract with the Department - were held in schools and recreation centres and other public buildings across Canada. Many Canadians dedicated an evening or a Saturday morning to participate in these study circles in six cities - Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga, Calgary and Vancouver.

Study circles are a policy making tool which have been used by some governments as an alternative to standard public opinion polling and focus groups. Although employed successfully in a number of countries such as Sweden and the United States, this was the first time that study circles have been adapted and used in Canada by the federal government. They are based on the fundamental premise that citizens have a responsibility to become informed on an issue, as well as a right to comment on it.

The immigration study circles offered individuals the unique opportunity to meet with other members of their community in small groups of fifteen to twenty, to exchange views, consider the policy choices confronting Canada and offer advice to the Minister. The result was a bringing together of neighbours from various ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds to discuss how immigration impacts their communities and their country, and to influence public policy.

A local organizer was designated and responsible for the organization of the study circles in each of the six sites. Generally speaking, these organizers were experienced in work place adult learning, continuing education, community consultation processes and citizenship development. Their role included the development and implementation of a local advertising strategy, the registration of participants, the recruitment and selection of facilitators, the mailing and distribution of Study Kits, the arrangement of facilities, and the compiling of results.

Each study circle was lead by a facilitator who was experienced in moderating group discussions and in dealing with controversial subject material. Their role was to help the participants remain focused on the issues at hand, to deliberate the facts of immigration rather than misconceptions, and to ensure that all points of view had an opportunity to be heard. Facilitators also assisted participants in compiling the recommendations and concerns which emerged from their discussions. Briefing sessions were held with facilitators in each of the six cities prior to the event to ensure that both the objectives and the format of the circles were clearly articulated and to address any questions or concerns. These sessions were jointly conducted by the Democracy Education Network and the Department.

Participants were provided with a **Study Kit** in advance of their participation in the study circles. The Kit included the **Discussion Document**, the **Tabloid** and a **Workbook** prepared by the Democracy Education Network. The Kit was designed to encourage participants to reflect upon the facts and issues of immigration prior to their study circle and to consider not only the origins of their own views on the issues, but the origins of diverging views as well.

In Vancouver, efforts were made to incorporate a strategy for *outreach circles* within the context of the study circle exercise. Outreach circles specifically included visible minorities, the elderly, low income earners, members of the aboriginal community, refugees and the disabled. It was reasoned that these groups may experience barriers such as language, literacy, physical disability, requirements for child care and low self-esteem which restrict their participation in democratic processes. Hence, there was a concerted effort to include those members of the community who may have less opportunity to influence public policy.

The study circles also incorporated a *youth track* component. Directors of education were asked to participate in classroom discussions in the six cities throughout the fall of 1994. The youth track was in keeping with the Minister's intention to include Canada's youth in the debate about the future of immigration in Canada. Although the results of the youth deliberations would not be available to contribute to the Framework, they will be useful in the development of a long term strategy for public input in immigration policy.

An analysis of the views, concerns and recommendations resulting from the study circles was produced in a report entitled, *Talking About Immigration: The Study Circles on the Future of Immigration Policy*. These findings were integrated with the general and substantive analysis of the consultations.

Feedback from the Democracy Education Network, the local organizers, the facilitators and the participants themselves, confirmed that the

immigration study circles had been a success. Over 1,100 Canadians participated in the circles - encouraging in light of the fact that they were held throughout the summer months. While many of the participants were "suspicious" of the process initially, they nevertheless **chose to participate because they thought it was a chance to speak to the government and to be heard.**

(iv) Other Initiatives

The Minister seized many opportunities over the course of the consultations to meet with a variety of individuals and groups to encourage them to participate in the process and to hear their views and suggestions.

For example, in late spring he attended the Parliamentary Day of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council and the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Council for Refugees in Ottawa. He addressed the Annual General Meetings of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in Winnipeg and the Canadian Association of School Boards in St. John's. In late summer, he also addressed and responded to the concerns of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in Montreal.

The Minister met with the immigration section of the Canadian Bar Association in Toronto and Vancouver and with both lawyers and NGOs in Winnipeg, Calgary and St. John's. He also engaged in round-table discussions with NGOs in Vancouver, Edmonton, Windsor, Toronto and Halifax.

To increase the opportunity for the public exchange of views, the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Immigration participated in a number of local call-in radio and television programs. As well, the Minister met with the editorial boards of many newspapers.

The Minister commissioned several papers that would contribute to the in-depth, substantive discussion of the issues. These included the Davis/Waldman report entitled, *The Quality of Mercy*, the Mendel Green report entitled, *A Review of the Business Immigration Program* and a joint report by the Department and the Refugee Law Unit at the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University entitled, *Report of the National Consultation on the Immigration of Family Members*.

Finally, *Insight Research Canada* conducted a series of focus groups with sixty participants, who represented both Canadian-born and non-Canadian born populations in three locations across the country. The purpose of the focus groups was to encourage in-depth discussion and gain a better understanding of the personal concerns and beliefs of participants on specific immigration-related issues.

## **E. Consultations with Citizenship and Immigration Staff**

The Minister was committed to the inclusion of Citizenship and Immigration staff within the consultations process. He felt that as deliverers of the program, staff could offer their insights about its operation, the potential difficulties and the opportunities for success.

It was agreed that staff would be provided with a number of options to contribute their views, knowledge and concerns to the consultative process. For example, staff in overseas posts, in regional citizenship and immigration offices across Canada and in National Headquarters, participated in various organized discussion groups within their own work teams, as participants of focus groups and/or by writing directly to the Consultations Task Force. Group discussions as well as individual submissions were issue-focused and resulted in specific recommendations to the Minister. Because Citizenship and Immigration was a newly created Department, the consultations provided a unique opportunity for staff across the various sectors of the organization to come together to reflect upon what they do and why they do it.

Departmental staff were pleased to be asked to participate in the process. Their efforts demonstrated a high degree of integrity and a sincere commitment to a well managed immigration program. A report which compiled and summarized the staff submissions was made available for the national conference.

## **F. The National Conference**

A national conference entitled, **Canada 2005: A Strategy for Citizenship and Immigration**, was held in the Government Conference Centre in Ottawa, on September 12th and 13th, 1994. This conference marked the culmination of the 1994 Immigration Consultations announced in February. Its primary purpose, as was the purpose of the entire consultation exercise, was **to listen and to hear** Canadians. Its second purpose was to advance the debate.

The conference brought together some two hundred people from a variety of backgrounds and regions of the country. Their common purpose was to advance the discussion on the future of Canada's immigration policy that had been taking place throughout the nation over the past eight months. To that end, delegates were charged with the specific task of providing the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration with practical advice and recommendations on future directions for

Canada's immigration policies and programs. To assist them in this endeavour, in advance of the conference, the Department provided the participants with a preliminary summary and analysis of the substantive findings of the consultations to date and the various reports of the working groups. Upon their arrival at the conference, they were also provided with the reports of the public meetings, staff consultations and a summary report of the study circles.

Participants were selected and invited to the conference in a variety of capacities. The overall objective was to reflect as broad a representation of the Canadian population as possible and a divergence of views with respect to immigration. Some of the represented sectors included academics and researchers, business leaders, community groups and immigrant serving agencies, federal, provincial and municipal governments, international agencies and organizations, labour unions and professional associations, the legal profession, the media, Members of Parliament, prominent Canadians, youth and the general public.

The conference was organized by the Pearson-Shoyama Institute in cooperation with the Department. It was designed to be equally divided between plenary and workshop sessions. Plenary sessions were intended to be lively, animated and thought provoking. They included: a panel discussion on *a vision of Canada* for 2005 as it pertained to citizenship and immigration; a presentation on *how immigration affects Canada's youth*; a debate on the current immigration policy; and a session on future directions for Canada's immigration policy in which the participants presented their advice to the Minister.

Workshops were intended as working sessions and designed to be inclusive, focused and objective-oriented. They were also arranged so that a variety of views would be represented at each of the workshop tables. Facilitators assisted the conference participants in fulfilling their workshop objectives. Regional workshops were also held simultaneously in St. John's, London, Winnipeg, Regina and Lethbridge. To facilitate discussion and advance the debate, a newsletter headlined, *An Emerging Vision: Snapshots of a Dialogue in Progress*, was produced over night. It highlighted the workshop results of the first day of the proceedings.

A portion of the Conference proceedings were broadcast live across the country by the Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel (CPAC). The remaining plenary sessions were filmed by CPAC for subsequent viewing. In addition, a report of the *Conference Proceeding*, including the proceedings of each of the workshops is available through the Department.

## The Results

In all, over 10,000 Canadians participated in the 1994 immigration consultations. Much of the success of this process was that it encouraged **all** Canadians to participate. A surprising number of Canadians, who were not affiliated with any immigration organization, group or association, indicated that they had never before participated in a consultative process such as this. Moreover, their contribution to the process - be it in public meetings, study circles, in hosting or attending a community consultation, and/or in writing a submission - disputed any claim that Canadians are indifferent or apathetic. And finally, the Canadian public demonstrated both the will and the capacity to embrace complex issues, to offer informed views, and to realize that trade-offs have to be made.

Most importantly, these immigration consultations facilitated a unique learning opportunity for all those involved. The process resulted in bringing together both the traditional and non-traditional stakeholders of immigration and the public in an open dialogue about the objectives of immigration and the role that it should play in Canada's future. While discussions may have been impassioned, the exchange of ideas and information has created new opportunities for understanding and partnership. Perhaps the most important lesson learned was that part of our civic responsibility in shaping public policy lies in our willingness to recognize and to consider different points of view.



## II. WHAT WE HEARD

The following pages provide an issue by issue summary of the views, concerns and recommendations of participants in the consultations process, whether through working groups, public meetings, study circles, individual or group written submissions, federal-provincial meetings, meetings with the Minister, staff consultations, or the national conference. In addition, some of the views and recommendations expressed in focus groups and in the special reports commissioned by the Minister on such issues as business immigration, the process for humanitarian and compassionate cases and the family reunification program have also been incorporated.

There has been no attempt to weigh the opinions and suggestions which have been put forward. Nor has there been any attempt to draw specific conclusions. The purpose of this document is simply to present the full range of views from those who contributed to the exercise. While the quotations that have been included may originate with one individual or one group, they were chosen because they reflect the views of many who participated in the process.

In most instances the views expressed are thoughtful and creative. In others, it is evident that the proposals are impractical or the views are based on contentious or perhaps, even inaccurate assumptions. Nevertheless, it was decided to include them for two reasons. First, they often reflected strongly held opinions expressed by a number of individuals; and second, since people took time to participate in the process, it is important to demonstrate that they were heard.

It is hoped that everyone who participated in this consultation process will see many of their thoughts and ideas reflected in the following pages.

## ISSUE 1 - A VISION OF CANADA

We asked, "What vision of Canada do we seek to support through the immigration program?".

A British Columbia group writes that immigration is, "...*the most important factor in determining a nation's future.*"

### A. Should we have immigration?

- At the public meeting in Toronto a participant said, "*The question is not one of balance. The question is should we have immigration.*"
- For the majority of people who participated in the consultations, the answer to this question is, "*Yes, Canada should have immigration.*". The reasons are numerous. Some are confident that immigration promotes economic growth and keeps Canada internationally competitive. Others feel that immigration is needed to sustain our population.

Although most people acknowledge positive benefits to immigration, a number of views and concerns were expressed with respect to the immigration levels, population growth and its effects, and Canada's increasing diversity. In addition, people described their vision of the Canada of today and tomorrow, and how the immigration program should be managed to achieve that vision. These are outlined in the following pages.

- Some people call for a "*moratorium on immigration*" or gradually reducing immigration until the "*doors are closed*", but most see immigration as both desirable and necessary. However, many are concerned about immigration levels and offer numerous suggestions.

A number recommend a temporary halt to immigration. For some, the reason is to allow Canada to, "...*successfully absorb people currently on welfare/social programs.*" For others, immigration should be stopped until there is a marked improvement in the Canadian economy.

Unemployment is a leading concern among Canadians. Although for many immigration is not seen as causing joblessness, neither is it seen as a force that will improve the unemployment situation. In a poll conducted by a private association the majority of respondents indicated that

*"...restrictions should be placed on the number of immigrant entrants in times of high unemployment, ...and that the current annual level is too high."*

Many people advocate a reduction in immigration levels as they feel Canada, *"...can no longer absorb the numbers that are being admitted,"* and they are concerned about increased economic and racial tensions.

There are some who feel that,

*"A policy which high-pressures immigration and is insensitive to...social, community-level implications will, more and more, increase popular resistance and inflame intolerance..."*

Others, however, are satisfied with current immigration levels. As one Quebec group writes, *"250,000 new immigrants every year can only benefit Canada."*

There are also those who advocate reducing restrictions and increasing immigration levels. They feel that Canada has the capacity to absorb many more immigrants.

- One Ontario group suggests linking immigration levels with the rate of unemployment, (i.e. decreasing immigration as unemployment rises and vice-versa), while another thinks it should be related to the Gross Domestic Product.
- One of the principles upon which the issue 2 working group based its discussions is that for immigration to be successful, immigrants must be integrated. Integration is a two-way process that entails change by both immigrants and the host society.

## B. Immigration and population

- The following excerpt from a written submission reflects the views of many, i.e. that growth for the sake of growth is no longer feasible,

*"Growth as an ever increasing and self-sustaining way of life, leading to increased consumption, has been our North American way of life. All of these treasured ideas and much of what we call our 'way of life' is now ending."*

- While a few feel that Canada has already surpassed its ideal population, many think that Canada's population should be stabilized at its current level. Still others propose that a population of 34-35 million would be about as much as Canada could sustain due to its "...*climatic conditions, geography and ecology...*"

At the public meeting in Winnipeg, for instance, some participants agreed with a statement the Minister had made in another forum that without immigration, the last Canadian would die in about 175 years. They viewed Canada as having enough room and resources for many more newcomers, and needing them for demographic purposes. One participant added that, "...*at one percent of the current population, immigration could not possibly have a deleterious effect upon the ecosystem.*"

- The effect that population growth will have on our environment and quality of life, seems to be of primary concern. A number of submissions highlighted the need for Canada to develop a forward looking population policy in which immigration would be based. For example, an association in British Columbia writes:

*"Immigration policy should be integrated into a population policy based on our economic and environmental potential. Full cost accounting should be used to determine the social and environmental costs of immigration in Canada."*

- Environmental deterioration, air and water pollution, traffic congestion, increased crime rates, over-burdened social services, garbage disposal problems and shortages in housing, food and energy, are some of the problems that people identify with over-population. They are concerned that as Canada's population grows, these problems will increase in severity.

One person writes, *"It must be realized that Canada is not an empty country waiting to be filled up. We have a fragile ecology."*

- While most recognize immigration as the chief means of achieving controlled population growth, a few recommend that the government develop programs to encourage population growth within the country. For example, the government could provide financial incentives to encourage Canadians to have children.

## C. Immigration and diversity

- Many people praise Canada's cultural diversity. They feel that it "...gives individuals the right to cherish their ancestry, draw on its strength and benefit from the ancestry of our neighbours."
- In their report, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration had this to say:

*"Diversity is one of Canada's enormous strengths, but the importance of the whole must be emphasized. We must be a choir, not a cacophony."*

- A public submission reads, *"Diversity...is a strength so long as it is not force-fed and micro-managed..."*
- A number of submissions, as illustrated by the excerpt below, highlight the contribution that diversity can make to the future development of Canada and to the Canadian economy:

*"As Canada participates increasingly in global affairs and trade, its strength in diverse skills and experiences will prove invaluable. A diverse nature of Canadian society and its respectfulness will be a model for the world. An immigration policy which supports diversity will immensely benefit Canada's future."*

- Others, however, hold the view that, *"ethnic diversity has no benefits, it only creates tension."* They oppose an official policy of multiculturalism on the basis that it fragments society. One such submission states:

*"Official multiculturalism may be a blueprint for division and intolerance. Culture should evolve in Canada, not be legislated."*

Many assert that Canada should be, *"...celebrating what its citizens have in common instead of their differences."*

There are also concerns that Canada is becoming a country made up of special interest groups, whose own goals take precedence over the national interests of the country. Although many agree that immigrants to Canada should be able to retain their religion and cultural practices, they feel that these should not take precedence over *"Canadian traditions."*

In addition, there are concerns over the funding by governments, of programs designed to assist in cultural heritage and language retention. As

exemplified in the following excerpt from a group in Nova Scotia, many feel that this is the responsibility of the community involved:

*"No other country in the world expects its tax payers to finance the practise of ethnic diversity. Whatever behaviour immigrants wish to adopt should be left to the choice of the individual. State support of ethnic diversity sows the seeds of conflict and should be avoided."*

## D. Vision of Canada

### (a) How we see ourselves

- *"Part of our problem is that we don't have a vision of what it means to be Canadian,"* reads one submission. Although many share this view, a number express what they think it means to be Canadian and identify what they feel are "core Canadian values."
- One group suggests that Canadians share the core values of, *"fairness, democracy, equality, humanitarianism, respect of law."*
- Focus group participants state that *"accepting of differences,"* *"ethnically diverse,"* *"tolerant,"* *"humane"* and *"proud"* are among the specific values to which they attribute Canadian identity.
- The following excerpt from an overseas staff submission captures other aspects of the "Canadian character."

*"Canadians value honesty and fairness. They respect hard work and people with integrity. And they are willing to give people a second or even third chance. But Canadians also expect their fellow Canadians to respect the system that is in place, and to not take advantage of their generosity."*

- A submission from Alberta asks that we

*"...continue the vision of our country as home to ordinary people living ordinary lives, working, paying fair taxes, supporting policies for the good of all, taking an interest in the government of our towns, provinces and the country, helping our neighbours no matter where*

*they or their fathers come from, making their neighbourhoods and communities good and safe places to live and raise families."*

- The working group which examined issue 2 describes Canada as

*"...an open, dynamic, creative and caring country...committed to developing a peaceful and democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for individual and collective rights. Canada is also committed to enhancing the economic welfare of its members, to playing a responsible role in the world and to resolving disputes through peaceful and legal means."*
- In its report, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration concluded that there are values that Canadians share.

*"Paramount were the importance of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Central also were the principles of justice, fairness, tolerance, and respect for our fellow citizens. Equality was essential..."*
- A youth delegate at the national conference adds:

*"My Canada is a Canada without boundaries. The differences between us are not drawbacks, but an opportunity to share different ideas."*

#### **(b) Our vision for the Canada of the future**

- Throughout the consultations, people have described the characteristics that they want their Canada to have. The following quotations represent the range of views put forward.
- These quotations were drawn from written submissions originating from Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Hamilton, and reflect the views of many who wrote in.

*"A cohesive society...which accepts, celebrates and respects other societies and cultures, including those of our own ethnic groups."*

Many people stated that they want a society that is independent, free, self-reliant, hard working, and law abiding. A society that upholds the moral values of honesty and integrity, and "...is dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment."

*"...a united and cohesive country motivated by common values, shared aspirations and cooperative attitudes towards individual freedom, justice and equality without special status or privilege."*

*"A multicultural nation that doesn't need to declare their freedom in slogans or statements. A nation of people that honours their freedom by example."*

*"A dynamic free capitalist society in which excellence is rewarded and incompetence and laziness is not rewarded."*

- Posts abroad put forth these visions of Canada;

*"The average Canadian wants a country with safe streets, high school graduates who can read, and a government that governs efficiently and cleanly."*

*"We want a dynamic and prosperous country. We want a country where individuals are not merely tolerant, but seek and encourage cultural exchange. We need to develop an environment that nurtures this exchange without promoting separate identities."*

*"...a free, fair, prosperous, diverse, democratic country, providing opportunities, proud of its traditions, balanced between rights and responsibilities."*

## E. Immigration and our vision of Canada

- Throughout the consultation process, Canadians have expressed concern that their Canada is disappearing; that *"...its values and lifestyle are being eroded and degraded."*
- Some feel that the time when most Canadians welcomed all immigrants has passed, at least temporarily. *"Times have changed and policy should reflect the times,"* reads one submission. In this same regard another submission reads:

*"(The current immigration policy) ignores the fragile present condition of the Canadian identity, at a time when the future of the country is uncertain. Immigration policy must not introduce even more uncertainty and ignorance about Canadian and heritage values."*

- On the other hand, some argued that our immigration policy must avoid the temptation of becoming short-sighted, and should reflect our commitment to long term goals. This is reflected in the following submission:

*"It is critical for Canada... to escape from the habit of reactive policy formulation in response to prevailing conditions such as the economy and so-called squeaky wheels of many sorts. I know that there are still many Canadians... who regard political leaders not just as managers of crises..., but as builders of tomorrow and tomorrow's vision for Canada. In this respect, immigration as a policy issue and programme matter, should be considered with foresight and wisdom."*

- The working group looking at issue 2 asserts that in order to gain public acceptance of and support for immigration,

*"...it will not be enough to replicate ourselves through immigration - that is, to merely inflate Canada and make it larger. Immigration will need to be seen as a force for making Canada better. This will have to be addressed through admission policies on criteria that reflect what we want to become and what Canada stands for."*

- Working group 8 writes,

*"In looking toward the future, immigration policy must be designed to enhance economic benefits and to reflect the rapidly changing economic context facing new immigrants and Canadians alike."*

*"Immigration should be part of a larger plan to raise Canada above its marginal status as an industrialised nation", adds another contributor.*

- Integration is viewed by some as the primary means of ensuring that immigration will benefit, rather than burden, Canadians. Others support programs that would promote tolerance and understanding.
- Many hold the view that

*"... a primary goal of immigration policy must be the preservation and enhancement of Canada's existing cultural and religious make-up and democratic institutions."*

- A submission from Citizenship and Immigration overseas staff contends that

*"Canadians would be supportive of an immigration vision that maintains the credibility and viability of the immigration program and Canada's social infrastructure. ...Canadians will draw the line when they observe instances of abuse against the immigration system and wilful exploitation of public funded social programs or when their own safety, rights and values are threatened."*

## ISSUE 2 - CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

We asked, **"What criteria should we set for selecting immigrants in order to achieve our social and economic objectives?"** and this is what we were told:

(It should be noted that the following comments do not refer to refugee and humanitarian immigration.)

### A. What is our priority?

- There are diverging opinions on what the priority should be in immigrant selection. Most people suggest that the selection of immigrants should be based primarily on the ability of newcomers to contribute to the economy. Some feel that greater priority should be given to family class immigration. Others hold the view that immigration should be managed on the basis of long-term social goals, rather than on the ups and downs of the business cycle.
- In its report, the issue 2 working group identifies principles which are described as, *"...the guiding tenets behind Canada's decision to shape its immigration program the way it does..."* Two of these principles are, (i) the decision to welcome immigrants is a fundamental choice that societies must make, and (ii) there is widespread agreement that immigration has played an important and positive role in Canada's development.

In addition, because the decision to admit immigrants requires not one choice but many, across a range of social and economic issues, broad support is required if the public is to accept the need to invest in immigrants.

- There are also those who argue that it is not within our capacity to exercise complete control over our systems of selection. For example, one submission reads:

*"We are naive if we think that we are entirely in control of our own destiny. There are powerful "push-pull" influences at work all around us which apply pressures on our selection processes."*

## B. What should our criteria be?

- The working group studying this issue recommends a two-tiered program that would balance the government's ideals against current circumstances. Tier 1 would focus on humanitarian immigration. This tier is costly but Canadians should bear this as a matter of solidarity with those in need. Tier 2 would incorporate all other immigration, including family and economic migration.

The numbers and composition of Tier 2 would be managed according to their affordability. Long-term social and economic benefits would be balanced against short-term integration costs. There was a consensus among working group members that there is no ideal population percentage for how many immigrants Canada should absorb. A long-term target was felt to be useful for planning purposes, however short term adjustments should be permitted as a response to current economic and social circumstances.

- During its discussions, the issue 2 working group identified a number of considerations that they feel must be kept in mind when designing an immigration plan. One such consideration is that immigration must be sensitive to economic restructuring, to the changing demands of the labour market and the need to find new jobs for displaced Canadians. Immigration must also be affordable.
- In that same vein, a number of participants maintain that rather than focusing on immediate shortages for specific skills, *"the selection of immigrants should be based on broad, long-term objectives to build a bank of available talents in Canada..."*
- Many people involved in the various consultation activities expressed concern with our diminishing capacity to afford immigrants who can neither support themselves nor be supported by their families, especially given the current state of our economy.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many feel Canada should be selecting skilled, educated, healthy, young people who have some command of either English or French, who have no criminal history and who have both the ability and willingness to be self-supporting and to integrate into Canadian society. This, perhaps, is best illustrated by the following Citizenship and Immigration staff submission:

*"Weight must be given to official language ability, education levels and potential to contribute to Canada... Potential to contribute to Canada must be viewed in terms of: (a) ability to demonstrate willingness to integrate socially and culturally; and (b) proven ability and demonstrated willingness to be productive economically."*

Others also argue that a person's record of success in their country of origin as well as their contributions to the community should be primary factors in the process of being selected to come to Canada.

- Some feel that for selection purposes, younger independent immigrants should not be expected to have the same amount of settlement funds as older immigrants. For example, a speaker at the public meeting in Halifax stated that *"...the financial criteria precluded many young people who have a much more valuable resource, their youth."* Another speaker at that same meeting added that Canada should *"select people for their qualities, not how much money they have in their bank accounts."*

Many study circle participants spoke about the need for a more pro-active, recruitment-oriented selection process. A Montreal participant noted that economic benefit comes from people in the arts and humanities, as well as people in business.

On the other hand, a few acknowledge that by taking the *"best and brightest,"* Canada may be depriving many countries of the people they need most.

- A limited number of participants suggest that the language criteria be relaxed.
- Some people commented on the racial mixture of immigration. They feel that Canada should be selecting immigrants from countries having the most in common with Canada and call for a return to the pre-1960 source countries. This, they feel, would reduce costs associated with integration and ease racial tensions.

A few recommend that we identify immigrants who adapt well to our social infrastructure so that we are better able to distinguish and select newcomers who are likely to integrate successfully into Canadian society.

Others advocate greater diversity to avoid the creation of ghettos. The argument presented is that if there are people who come from a variety of countries and cultures, there will be less opportunity for people from the same country or culture to congregate.

In their report on the issue, the working group points out that due to greater social, ethnic and religious diversity, the complexity of integration has increased.

- Many participants argue that it is not enough for Canada to establish criteria for selecting immigrants. It is equally important for those who may choose to come to Canada to be well informed about life here and the challenges that they may encounter. This will decrease the chance for disappointment on the part of both immigrants and Canadians.
- One of the considerations identified by the working group as well as in many of public submissions on this issue, is that immigrants are highly concentrated in large cities, making it even more important that integration succeed.

### C. What about the family class?

- Widely diverging views are expressed on the issue of family class immigration to Canada. They range from a call for the complete discontinuation of this component of the immigration program to a realignment of the immigration objectives *"to give family reunification the highest priority."* While some view family reunification as *"a matter of right"* that is essential for the stability and mental health of the family unit, others view it as an act of Canadian compassion and generosity that *"in recent years has been abused."*
- The definition of family for sponsorship purposes was also a matter of great debate. Although not explicitly discussed by the working group studying issue 2, it was raised by many other participants in the context of the selection criteria. In addition, the Department and the Refugee Law Research Unit of York University's Centre for Refugee Studies jointly held a

*National Consultation on the Immigration of Family Members* which was attended by government officials and representatives from a wide range of organizations.

- There is no consensus among all of the contributors to these consultations on what the definition of family should be. Opinions range from limiting family to spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age, to broadening family to encompass "*culturally appropriate definitions of family*," including extended family members (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), same sex partners and common law partners.
- The report from the *National Consultation* recommends "...*the adoption of a contextualized system of family class immigration premised on the identification of relationships of actual emotional and material dependency or interdependency...*" with respect to both intimate partners and the broader family unit.

In other words, a person should not be considered a candidate for family sponsorship based solely upon the specific family tie, but also on the level of commitment and emotional and economic interdependency between the sponsor and the family member.

This could lead to a broader application of the definition of family, for example, same sex and common-law partners, or a narrower application, such as with parents or adult children.

The *National Consultation* report asserts that in order to adopt this type of approach to family class immigration,

*"...a more flexible yet functionally focused set of criteria should be used to assess the existence of a family relationship (other than an intimate partnership)."*

- Some public submissions promoting a more limited definition argue that family-sponsored immigrants do not contribute to the economy to the same degree as independent immigrants. For example, many feel that sponsored parents are often too aged to work and place a strain on the social and medical systems. In addition, many people feel that being separated from one's family is a choice that every immigrant must make when deciding to come to Canada.

Of those advocating a broader definition, many hold the view that family-sponsored individuals are less of a burden to the tax payer as they have an existing support system in Canada. Further, they argue that without a family

support system, *"it is more difficult for the immigrant or any of the family members to become economically self-sufficient"* and that *"the extended family unit contributes to the socio-economic stability of a nation."*

- Many advocate the imposition of selection criteria on family-sponsored immigrants. Although most agree that they should be less rigorous than the requirements for independent immigrants, some suggest criteria based on language and general ability to integrate into Canadian society. For example, one group submission states:

*"It was agreed that economic and labour market considerations should be part of some of family class selection criteria. Official language ability and education should also be applied to certain family class members (e.g. siblings, parents) with a point system or something similar."*

- Some suggest that family-sponsored immigration should decrease in comparison to independent immigration during periods of economic downturn. The numbers could be rebalanced following sufficient economic recovery.

Some participants of the national conference also argue that the proportion of family class immigrants should be reduced and that *"the government should consider possible (additional) restrictions on the sponsoring of family members."*

- Many people feel that sponsors need be held financially responsible to a greater degree than they are currently. The predominant view is that sponsors should bear all, or at least a greater proportion of the costs for the sponsored relatives' maintenance, well-being and adaptation during the entire sponsorship period.

Of some concern is the inability of the current system to deal adequately and efficiently with situations where sponsors do not comply with the conditions of their sponsorship agreements. As stated in one submission, *"the breakdown on sponsorship and inability of sponsors to financially support the sponsored family members is a major problem for the government which needs immediate attention and resolution."*

The provinces have a special interest in this issue of sponsorship breakdown due to the costs they incur as a result. *"More rigorous enforcement of sponsorship undertakings..."* is suggested by the *National Consultation* as

one of the ways to increase confidence in family class immigration. Other methods such as the imposition of bonds are also offered.

A few others, however, are of the view that the financial requirements of sponsorship are more stringent than necessary.

- The *National Consultation* as well as other consultation participants, identify three other possible measures for increasing the integrity of the program: (i) conditional admission; (ii) requiring sponsors to post performance bonds; and (iii) limiting the overall number of sponsorships that can be made by any one sponsor.

#### D. The selection process

- Many participants express concern regarding the current point system which is used for processing and selecting immigrants. Their concerns vary however, as illustrated by the following quotes from a couple of submissions:

*"The point system is far too narrow. If the applicant doesn't have a prearranged job or fall under a particular needed job category, they are rejected. We are losing many excellent applicants who would add greatly to this country and require little or no resettlement assistance by enforcing the current point system so rigidly."*

*"The point system should be regularly evaluated to reflect current realities. Specifically, there should be a better match between Canadian needs and skills sought in assessing points for designated occupations."*

- Many suggestions are offered to alter the point system. One such suggestion is to "reward" those who have the financial resources to be self-supporting by giving them additional points, thereby facilitating their admission to Canada.
- A few suggest that the point system should be abandoned and replaced by a lottery, where each "winner" must meet minimum eligibility requirements. These people refer to the lottery system used by the United States in recent years to target countries that were under-represented in their immigrant population.
- Many agree that there are problems with the designated occupations list. Criticisms include that the list is out of date, that the information is not applied

at the proper time in the selection process, (i.e. at the end rather than at the beginning), that it is compiled in isolation of the provinces and employers, and that it does not reflect future needs.

- The potential inequities of the selection systems and processes with respect to gender are raised by a number of individuals and organizations. For example, the submission of one group reads:

*"The selection requirements of skills, business expertise and investment capital do not acknowledge the reality of women worldwide, who are often systematically denied access to education, training and what is considered skilled and valuable employment."*

- Other concerns related to the inequities of the selection processes are also raised. One such submission states that *"there is a systemic bias in the current point system against certain classes and races of people, especially with its emphasis on language proficiency and higher education."*
- Finally, the barriers encountered by people with disabilities and other medically inadmissible people are also cause for concern among some people. They advocate less stringent requirements.
- Some people criticize the length of time it takes to process immigration applications, especially those for family sponsorship and visitors' visas.

### **ISSUE 3 - HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATIONS**

We asked, **"How should Canada meet its humanitarian obligations towards refugees?"** Here's what we were told:

- Again, there were diverging opinions on Canada's immigration policy with respect to our humanitarian obligations. While many people agree that Canada must continue to pursue our humanitarian objectives for the world's refugees, others feel that the country's *"enviable past record...leaves no further commitment to be fulfilled."* Still others argue that the current economic situation in Canada imposes certain limits on our capacity to react to global situations and that *"there needs to be a balance between individual needs and the country's ability to respond."*

## A. How many refugees and humanitarian cases should we be accepting?

- The working group charged with examining this issue asserts that "*Canada should consider increasing the annual refugee level.*" This same view was expressed by others who feel that Canada has not lived up to its commitment in this area. It was pointed out at a few of the public meetings that Canada has consistently failed to meet its numerical targets.
- Stop setting targets, suggest a number of people. On the one hand, people assert that setting targets may lead to the creation of artificial refugees. Others feel that targets do not allow sufficient flexibility to respond to rapidly changing world conditions. Without targets, some people feel that Canada will not live up to its humanitarian obligations.
- Many advocate limiting the intake of refugees or, at a minimum, subjecting them to basic eligibility requirements. There is concern that we are accepting too many persons who are not genuine refugees, or who do not fit the United Nations' definition of a Convention Refugee. A popular belief is that Canada's generosity is being abused, that refugees are "...*being manufactured for the Canadian market...*"

Participants in the focus group study feel that while many refugees entering Canada were in peril, many others were "*queue-jumping.*"

- Among study circle participants, the word "*abuse*" was frequently used in relation to refugees. Some feel that "*bogus*" refugees abuse the system. Others feel that genuine refugees are abused by the system. There was a tendency for some people to use the terms "*immigrant*" and "*refugee*" interchangeably, which may indicate that the public needs additional information on the differences between these two groups.
- Some people hold the view that Canada should cease accepting refugees altogether as they place a strain on social programs and the legal system. Increased private sponsorship is suggested as a means of alleviating this strain.

## B. Overseas process for refugee selection

- The working group looking at Canada's humanitarian obligations arrived at a somewhat similar conclusion to the Issue 2 working group; i.e. that refugee and immigrant processing should be dealt with separately.

- Working group #2 recommends a two-tiered approach to immigration:
 

*"Tier 1 would incorporate humanitarian immigration consisting of refugees and persons in similar circumstances. ... Tier 2 would incorporate all other immigration."*
- Working group #3 arrived at the following conclusion,
 

*"Refugees must be distinguished from the overall immigration program and assessed according to their protection needs rather than immigration selection criteria."*

This refers specifically to the overseas selection of refugees, not to the refugee determination process as applied to in-Canada asylum claimants.

Many other participants, including those at the national conference agree with this recommendation. A further comment on this issue is provided in a submission from Ontario:

*"There is a problem in the inclusion of refugee policy as part of a broader immigration policy because it suggests that refugee determination is a "proactive" process over which the government can exercise control rather than a humanitarian obligation to global situations."*

- Other contributors, including participants at the Halifax public meeting, also envision an immigration program where refugees and immigrants are dealt with separately. Some recommend separate legislation and a co-Minister responsible for refugees.
- Many feel that refugees should not be accepted from safe third countries. They argue that a refugee who has already found a safe haven should not be considered for resettlement in Canada.
- There is the view that overseas immigration officials should have more flexibility when selecting and documenting refugees. At the Winnipeg public meeting a participant suggested officials need to be more discriminating when assessing refugee claimants. He asserted that officials should have greater flexibility to allow them to match the requirements with the client's situation. For example, the documentation that a refugee claimant is asked to produce should correspond with his/her ability to obtain such information.
- The opinion held by many is that there are too many refugee claims processed in Canada. They argue that the in-Canada system is a *"pull factor"*

*for illegal immigration*" and for "*queue-jumping*", and that refugee recruitment should, for the most part, be done from refugee camps and countries in trouble. They assert that in order to "*restore integrity*" to the whole humanitarian program, all, or at least the majority of refugee claimants, should be processed abroad. The following excerpt illustrates this common concern:

*"The percentage of refugee claimants that Canada has admitted in recent years has been so excessive in comparison with other Western countries...that it is obvious that the system has been endlessly abused, thus making it all the harder for genuine refugees to find acceptance and creating disillusionment in immigration applicants who are willing to abide by the rules."*

Focus group participants add that the refugee screening process in Canada is too slow and that it is a "*financial burden on Canadians*." They argue that these costs could be better spent for services and support of people identified to be "*truly*" in need.

- Another suggestion for changing the refugee claims process is for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to conduct refugee determination independently abroad. Participating countries would need to agree to accept their share of the refugees identified by this body.
- A British Columbia group encourages the extension of humanitarian assistance and resettlement to persons in "*miserable situations*," especially those with relatives in Canada.

### C. The in-land refugee status determination process

- There was a general consensus that the process for dealing with in-Canada refugee claimants must be modified and accelerated. The Davis/Waldman report, a report commissioned by the Minister on the processes available to persons who are determined not to be refugees and who seek humanitarian and compassionate treatment, indicates that the department should adopt a "*...program delivery system geared to seeking "remedies" or "solutions" for its clients...*"

The working group examining this subject agrees with the Davis/Waldman report and recommends:

*"(1) that refugee claimants should be dealt with as fairly and quickly as possible; (2) that Citizenship and Immigration Canada should develop a remedy-based attitude; and, (3) that an appeal on the merits process must be developed, proposing a number of modifications to the proposed system."*

- Some of the participants of the national conference argue that *"there is a lack of consistency in the Immigration and Refugee Board's decision-making process."* They also note the *"discrepancies between acceptance rates of refugees in different countries."*
- One suggestion calls for the establishment of a system with an independent refugee claim evaluation mechanism. Both the Department and the evaluation mechanism would consider claims, and the Department would have the same right as the claimant to appeal decisions of the evaluation mechanism.
- A group of Vancouver immigration lawyers proposes a process with  
*"...one board member deciding the claimant's case, and then an appeal which is internal to the Immigration and Refugee Board, again with one member hearing the case."*
- Some suggest eliminating the right to appeal the decision of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).
- Several contributors submit that claims from non-refugee producing countries such as the United States, should be automatically rejected.
- A national organization recommends consideration of an amnesty program for refugee claimants in Canada who are not affected by health or security concerns, in order to eliminate the current backlog.
- Participants at a meeting in southern Ontario organized by a Member of Parliament suggest involving NGOs in the processing of in-land refugee claims.

#### D. What about those involved in the process?

- Some people who assist refugees in Canada are concerned that many of the people involved in processing and reviewing refugee claims do not have the level of knowledge required to make well-informed assessments, nor are they sympathetic to the plight of refugees. It is suggested that persons involved in this process should be rotated so as not to become hardened.
- The Davis/Waldman report states that:

*"Decision makers ... must be selected for their adaptability, cross-cultural sensitivity and ability to exercise independent judgement."*
- Others feel that more care should be taken to appoint fair and impartial persons to the IRB. A number hold the view that persons associated with refugee advocacy groups should not be appointed. Others suggest that appointments to the IRB should be made by an *"independent committee."* Ongoing performance evaluations are also recommended.
- Opening up communication between the IRB and Canadian officials overseas is recommended by some, as the latter are knowledgeable and have access to information about local conditions.
- Non-government organizations also feel that they have information that would be of assistance to persons involved in processing refugee status claims both in Canada and abroad, and advocate improved information sharing among all of the players. In this regard, the working group suggests

*"...a forum consisting of NGO and CIC representatives at all levels of government to discuss issues of concern to both groups..."*

A national organization asserts that the Department must *"...continue to improve relationships with Canadian NGOs and churches, and those who work with refugees..."*, to gain from the domestic and global networks of these organizations.

- There is concern about the role of the immigration consultant in the refugee determination process. Many feel that these individuals *"prey on the vulnerability of immigrants"* and should be prohibited from appearing before the IRB. The regulation of consultants is advocated by several individuals and groups.

## E. What is the best way to meet our obligations?

- Many people question whether resettlement in Canada is the best means of meeting our humanitarian obligations. Some suggest that Canada should

*"...offer safe haven, but it does not follow that Canada is obliged to grant unlimited access to scarce social services and rights and privileges conferred by immigrant status or citizenship."*

In this same vein, another participant adds that "*the concept of humanitarian obligations is great, but charity and immigration don't mix.*"

The working group writes, "*...temporary protected status is not an appropriate response to mass movements in the current Canadian context. Canada should retain its traditional approach of permanent resettlement.*"

- Others suggest the establishment of refugee camps either in Canada or in countries near their own where people can live safely until they are able to be repatriated. Similarly, refugee reception centres akin to those existing in Europe are also suggested.
- Some participants assert that refugees should be asked to repay part of their resettlement costs. These funds could then be used to assist other refugees.
- With respect to orphaned children, overseas personnel recommend that the UNHCR provide Canada with a list of adoptable children who cannot be resettled or repatriated. In cases involving children who have been separated from their families, Canada could provide a temporary safe haven. Others also call for a less complicated system for finding adoptive homes for orphaned children.
- Many assert that a more permanent solution is for Canada to work internationally to minimize the need for people to flee their countries of origin. "*The best way to help economic migrants is to improve conditions in their country of origin,*" states a British Columbia submission. Another submissions adds:

*"We should be exploring means of resolving the conflict situations which displace people. It is not always appropriate to meet our global humanitarian responsibilities by bringing people to Canada."*

## F. Are we taking adequate care of women and children?

- The plight of women, in particular, was often addressed as a topic. Many persons feel that women, especially widows with children, "*were not adequately reflected in the overall numbers*" and should be given greater consideration in our humanitarian efforts.
- Participants at two of the public meetings questioned why so few refugee women are admitted to Canada when they are the majority in the camps. A commonly expressed recommendation throughout all of the consultation venues is that "*Canada should continue to take a leadership role in calling for greater protection of refugee women and children.*"
- A number of the participants of the national conference raise concerns regarding the federal government's Women at Risk (WAR) program. Specifically, they identify problems with the government's crisis response rate and state that "*processes to bring women out of extremely perilous situations needed to be speeded up.*" In addition they call upon the federal government to assume a leadership role in "*promoting international recognition of gender as part of the refugee definition.*"
- There are repeated calls for the government of Canada to continue to recognize that gender persecution is a legitimate reason to claim refugee status. However, while some feel that women who are victims of domestic violence in their country of origin should be given greater consideration in our humanitarian objectives, others feel

*"We should not accept women refugees simply on the basis of family abuse. That is the responsibility of the native country."*

## ISSUE 4 - INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

We asked, "**How can Canada work with other nations to deal with migration pressures?**" and we heard:

- The working group examining this issue did so for two purposes: to contribute to the immigration consultations, and to contribute to the foreign policy review which is being conducted simultaneously.

- The working group stressed that voluntary international migration is a normal and largely beneficial human phenomenon, which becomes a problem only when flows are massive or involuntary. The basic question is how to enhance human security, i.e. how to eliminate the oppression, violence and economic or physical desperation that forces people to move.
- The working group asserts that Canada needs to develop a coherent strategy integrating international migration issues with other foreign policy issues, including development, environment, human rights, and peace keeping. They put forth suggestions to achieve this in their report.
- On the international stage, the working group states that, while "*Canada by itself can do little, ... it is well placed to exercise leadership, and should do so vigorously... by working with other countries and organizations such as the U.N.*"
- "*Development is vital to the manageability of international migration.*", reads the report, and this can be achieved through aid, trade and foreign investment.
- Environmental degradation and human rights abuses are examples of some of the causes of migration that the working group feels Canada should give more attention to in its foreign policy.
- With respect to countries experiencing internal conflicts, the working group recommends that Canada should continue its peace keeping activities, but place more emphasis on preventing such conflicts. They also suggest that "*more consistent attention*" needs to be paid to "*large-scale forcible internal displacement within a country*", which often precedes a massive movement of refugees.
- The group also recommends that Canada continue to work to reduce international trade in arms, in order to increase the ability for more effective control over conflicts taking place within other countries, for example, civil wars.
- The working group suggests that

*"Canada needs to try to get the international community to deal with migration and refugees practically and as an integral part of the complex of world issues, and to educate their publics that migration flows are natural and basically positive. The aim should be to create the kind of world where staying home will be a viable choice for most people."*

- At home, the working group recommends
  - "...much closer and more continuous senior level coordination among federal departments, at every stage of policy planning and implementation, on the whole complex of issues of which migration is a part."*
- The public did not comment extensively on this issue. Of those who did express their views, many agree with a Saskatchewan group who recommend that
  - "Canada support global strategies within the United Nations and elsewhere for the protection of and permanent solutions for refugees."*
- Most people agree that Canada must work with the United Nations, private aid organizations and/or other international agencies such as Amnesty International to improve the economic, social, political and environmental situations in foreign countries, thereby minimizing the need for people to flee these countries.
- In addition, Canada could provide assistance for the resettlement of persons to nearby countries until repatriation is possible.
- An Ontario-based organization suggests that Canada *"Tie foreign aid and trade relations to population stabilization and human rights improvements."* A group in Nova Scotia add that *"countries which routinely suspend human rights and freedoms and commit human rights abuses need to be brought to task by the international community."*
- Another recommends that Canada *"...encourage countries that have not signed the UNHCR Geneva Convention to do so"*, and *"Encourage other nations...to open their doors to refugees."*
- Some advocate that an international conference on migration should be held in order to focus world attention on this growing problem.
- Many people are concerned that the existing definition for a convention refugee is outdated and does not reflect the current situation. They recommend that Canada work with the United Nations and other Convention signatories to come up with a more accurate definition that will be applied equally by all. Some propose a tighter definition, while others feel a broader definition is required.

- Study circle participants recognized the links between international cooperation and effective control measures. A Toronto participant asked:

*"How can the 150 nations of the U.N. agree on international controls when Metro Toronto's municipalities can't agree on where to put a subway line?"*

## ISSUE 5 - INTEGRATION

We asked, "How should we help newcomers integrate into Canadian society?" and we heard:

The majority of people who participated in the consultations feel that the integration of newcomers is possible and necessary. With few exceptions, the consensus is that language is the key to integration. It is either the greatest barrier to integration or the chief means of achieving it.

Some regard the integration process as a continuum which *"should be viewed as a dynamic and ongoing process involving all members of society."*

Recognition of foreign credentials and racism are also underlined as important factors of integration or the lack thereof.

Quite a number of contributors assert that assimilation and not integration is the answer, and that Canada should replace its *"mosaic"* with a *"melting pot"*.

It is argued by some that the success of the integration process is linked to the selection of immigrants who demonstrate the capacity to adapt to both the Canadian economy and Canadian society.

Others, however, view the investment in the integration of newcomers as an important investment in Canada's future. This is articulated in the following submission from British Columbia:

*"...integration is always difficult. The most difficult aspect of all is that the results are often not tangible. We often do not see the fruits of our efforts to encourage integration or of immigrants' efforts to integrate until the next generation. We should not expect it to be any other way."*

## A. Who should be responsible for integration costs?

- Funding is a topic that was raised on numerous occasions. Those who provide integration services, including municipalities, school districts and NGOs, report that they are insufficiently funded to meet the demand for integration services, as observed in the following excerpt:

*"The federal government must adjust its support for settlement programs to take into account that more and more newcomers are arriving with little or no familiarity with Canada and Canadian society, or facility in either of Canada's official languages...Local communities and in particular, the school systems, are having to address a much wider spectrum of needs..."*

- There are numerous opinions as to who should cover integration costs. Some feel that independent immigrants should bear all or most of the integration costs for themselves and any dependants, that funding for family class integration should come from sponsors, and that refugee integration costs should continue to be funded by the federal government.
- Some suggest that anyone able to afford the costs should pay.
- While allowing the exploration of alternate funding sources, the working group recommends that

*"...the federal government confirm its commitment to fund basic language training to those immigrants without skills in one of the official languages."*

- One opinion expressed by many is that the federal government should be solely responsible for all integration costs, as it is the federal government which admits immigrants to Canada.
- Some people recommend that funds be diverted from heritage language training programs from the Department of Canadian Heritage to immigrant integration programs.
- Others feel that private organizations should assume more responsibility for immigrant integration. The government could assist, for example, by providing facilities for language classes and other integration programs.

- A panellist at the Halifax public meeting suggested that the fees paid by independent immigrants, especially those from the business program, should be diverted to fund integration programs and support refugees.
- A national church organization asserts that private sponsorship should be encouraged as it is more economical. Its report suggests that a refugee can achieve integration in less than a year if privately sponsored (the sponsorship period for a government sponsored refugee is one year).

In that same vein, another submission from Ontario recommends

*"Integration...should be the full responsibility of the sponsor. The federal government should withdraw completely from programs such as language training...(Government) programs should be limited to educating Canadians on the benefits of sponsoring refugees and immigrants."*

## B. What can be done to improve immigrant integration?

- The notion that integration should begin abroad is a popular one, and many recommend that more attention be given to orienting immigrants before they arrive in Canada.

*"Integration should start in the home land before immigrants emigrate.", writes one organization. "The pre-immigration process should include reasonable expectations as an immigrant, education on the Canadian way of life and the rights and responsibilities of being Canadian, mandatory language instruction before and after emigrating paid for by the immigrant (seniors excluded), and labour market language training for qualified immigrants."*

- The working group underlined that immigrants are future citizens. To allow them to fully participate in Canadian society, they should be provided with the necessary tools; i.e. language and skills training, etc.
- *"Existing programs need to be strengthened,"* is the view of the working group and others who wrote in. This refers to language and other integration programs, as well as orientation programs.

While one submission states that *"a receptive host society is crucial to the integration process"*, a group in Nova Scotia is quick to point out that

federally funded settlement programs, "*do not, at present, play a major role in encouraging Canadians to be more tolerant and accepting of newcomers.*"

Participants in one of the workshops at the national conference agree that "*immigrants cannot integrate without support*" and without an adequate "*infrastructure*" of programming.

- The provinces want to see improvement in the orientation services offered in Canada, and suggest greater cooperation between governments as a means of achieving this. Provinces feel that they need to have sufficient information to plan in advance and prepare communities for the expected immigrants.
- Many people advocate improved counselling services for business immigrants including investment advice; how to deal with Canada's banking system; how to contact affiliated immigration organizations or associations; and how to obtain information on the regulations governing their financial and business activities.
- Some suggest establishing orientation centres or "*welcome centres*" and making the completion of an orientation program a condition of obtaining permanent resident status. Others add that the integration strategy should "*build-in*" our expectations of newcomers in terms of an obligation or commitment "*to return something to Canada in the form of service, voluntarism, etc., beyond their contribution to the Canadian economy through employment and business development.*"
- A Winnipeg organization recommends establishing national standards and requirements for settlement services. They further suggest that non-profit organizations need to coordinate their efforts in providing integration services to immigrants.
- A popular view is that the "... *key to successful integration lies in our selection criteria.*" Several people suggest that ability in one of the official languages should be a criterion for the selection of some or all immigrants. Some go further by proposing that a person's ability to integrate should be considered in the selection process.

On this subject, the working group advocates a different approach

*"...the federal government not apply language or other needs of immigrants as screening devices for rejecting refugees and family class immigrants in an effort to reduce or rationalize costs for basic*

*immigrant services, to avoid potential discrimination against those from non-English and non-French speaking countries."*

- Others suggest monitoring immigrant integration, citing two different purposes. The first is to determine which integration programs work best. The second is to identify those who have difficulty in integrating and adjust the selection criteria accordingly.
- "*There needs to be more cooperation among all levels of government and organizations that serve the immigrant population*", is the view of most, including the provinces. The feeling is that integration and settlement services, including language training, can be improved at a reduced cost if there is a coordinated approach.

The working group had this to say about improved coordination:

*"It is recommended that the federal government develop new models and strategies to coordinate the responsibilities and efforts of all levels of government, school boards, NGOs, the corporate and labour sectors, immigrants themselves and other stakeholders to facilitate the settlement of immigrants and their reception by Canadian society."*

One group proposes a "*settlement kit*" and training courses for organizations providing settlement services.

- Submissions received from the general public, immigrant serving organizations and staff, as well as comments made during the public meetings, indicate that integration programs should be available and accessible to a broader spectrum of people. The policy for restricting language and other "*coping classes*" to certain immigrants and limiting the time allotted for such training should be re-examined. As one person put it at the Winnipeg public meeting:

*"Citizenship is not an end to integration, but a means to integration."*

- In discussions with the provinces, the predominant concern was not increasing the range of programs. Rather, they want to reduce client confusion caused by the array of integration services offered by governments at all levels.
- An Ontario group suggests that "*volunteering is a powerful vehicle for integration*," and recommends the creation of a Ministry and a national

volunteer program. This Ministry would create a national volunteer program, develop national standards and establish an awards system.

- Some people are of the opinion that children and youth have been ignored with respect to integration. The number of non-English and non-French speaking children in the school systems has dramatically increased. Children and youth are faced with different value systems - that of their family and that of their peers.

The working group looking at issue 6 identifies immigrant and refugee school children as a group which requires special attention, and recommends that the Council of Ministers of Education give high priority to addressing the challenges that culturally, racially, linguistically, and religiously diverse classrooms provide.

An Alberta school district highlights that

*"...immigrant children, particularly refugee children, have needs beyond learning English....These children and their families need support beyond what local boards can provide given present financial realities."*

One organization recommends that a buddy system be introduced in schools, whereby students would be matched with newcomers.

On this matter a youth delegate at the national conference calls for more programs which involve the interaction of youth from different cultures in order to foster tolerance and understanding. Another youth delegate adds:

*"School is a microcosm of our society. Fragmentation should be avoided in the early years, and greater integration should be fostered in the school system."*

- While some favour one integration strategy for all immigrants, others envision a series of programs tailored to meet different needs, e.g. family sponsored immigrant versus refugee.
- Some people suggest that immigrants should be more involved in the design of language and other integration programs to ensure that they will address immigrant settlement needs. On the issue of a more client-centred approach to integration, a group in Ontario states:

*"There is a need to recognize the barriers which immigrants face... Our attention needs to be directed to increased sensitivity about this*

*process. Information and assistance needs to be balanced with an understanding of the newcomer's perspective."*

### C. Integration - a two-way process

- Whether current integration policies are genuinely a "two-way street" was hotly debated by study circles across Canada. Many participants want integration programs to be more comprehensive and more self-financing. In Vancouver, it was suggested that language training should be offered on a student loan basis, to be gradually repaid once the newcomer is working.
- Many feel that Canadians need to become more involved in immigrant integration; that full integration will only be achieved with the participation and cooperation of both immigrants and Canadians. Some propose "*integration sponsorship*," or a type of mentor program matching immigrants with Canadians.
- The working group suggests that the government  
  
*"encourage increased participation of Canadians in a joint effort to generate more resources and support for various types of immigration programs."*
- Some people see the full responsibility for integration, financial and otherwise, falling solidly on the shoulders of immigrants. Others feel that Canadians must be more patient, tolerant and willing to offer a helping hand. This can be achieved, they suggest, through greater public education on immigration and increased opportunities for people to come together and learn about one another. As one group articulates, "*emphasizing the positive aspects and the human face of immigration is paramount.*"

On this matter, the participants of one of the workshops of the national conference agree that "*a ten year strategy for immigration requires an equally long-term plan for integration, including a public education component.*" They add, however, that public education "*does not mean a public relations campaign*" and that "*more concrete information on the real costs and benefits of immigration should be made available and distributed to the general public.*"

- Participants of the focus groups point out that new Canadians bring with them values which both strengthen and enrich Canadian society. These include

*"a strong sense of family and working together, a commitment to bettering themselves and personal achievement, a high regard and appreciation for educational opportunities, a strong work ethic, and strong religious beliefs."*

- Employers are identified as one group which could make a greater contribution to integration.
- A submission from staff proposes that children be taught integration and acceptance of cultural differences from an early age in order to create a more tolerant society for the future.

## **ISSUE 6 - IMPROVED COORDINATION**

We asked, **"How do we integrate immigration policies with other policy areas?"**

Two working groups were established to examine this issue. The first looked at how immigration policies can be integrated with labour force policies, i.e. full participation in the labour market, accreditation and skills recognition. The second examined how to integrate immigration policies with those of five public service areas: housing, policing, health, education and municipal affairs.

Views, comments and recommendations from the other consultation activities can also be grouped under these two general categories. As a result, this section has been divided to report on this issue in the same way that it was examined by the working groups.

### **A. Integrating immigration policies with labour force policies**

- The working group asserts that everyone having a right to work in Canada should have equal opportunity to participate fully in the labour market. As one means of achieving this, they suggest a national strategy to deal with racism and discrimination in the labour market.
- Immigrant settlement includes

*"...education , training or other assistance... needed to allow immigrants to apply for jobs on an equal footing with Canadians..."*

concludes the working group. Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources Development Canada should work together in developing programs that will address the training needs of all Canadians, including immigrants.

Some of the delegates of the national conference among others, maintain the need for better labour market adjustment services for immigrants in order to integrate them into the Canadian economy. They call for a strategy whereby existing retraining, upgrading and bridging programs are available to newcomers in the short-term and a comprehensive accreditation plan is put in place over the longer-term.

- Accreditation was an issue that was also raised at every public meeting, in discussions with the provinces and non-government agencies and in many of the written submissions.

An organization in Ontario states:

*"The point system awards points to foreign qualifications, but that is not translated into employment opportunity or recognition in Canada. Many immigrants find this confusing and misleading."*

The report from working group 9 indicates that, although the provinces "...acknowledged their responsibility and shared interest in addressing...", the issue of accreditation, "many sought federal involvement to achieve a degree of national consistency, in part because of the role of national professional and trade associations."

The provinces feel that, because of the lack of recognition of skills and education acquired outside of Canada, we are losing the benefits of many people who could contribute a great deal to the country if they were given the opportunity.

In Winnipeg, a public meeting participant suggested that, although this matter falls under provincial jurisdiction, only the federal government is in a position to provide leadership in the formulation of *"not a federal, but a national policy"*. He further suggested that accreditation policies, both national and international, be reviewed in developing a Canadian policy.

This view is echoed in the working group report, which also suggests the creation of a coordinating body to ensure that criteria used in assessing education and skills are being applied fairly and consistently across Canada.

An Alberta submission further recommends that an information/assessment centre be established *"to assist immigrants (and other Canadians) in obtaining recognition for their professional qualifications."*

Accreditation is seen by many as being a cost effective way of filling the demand for certain professions. For example, a Montreal group proposes allowing immigrant doctors to practise in rural areas where there is a shortage of medical professionals.

- A number of groups argue that related to accreditation, is the issue of employment equity. They call for a strategy to ensure *"real accountability and to enforce employment equity."*

A group from Thunder Bay suggests the creation of employment programs that would require the cooperation of the business community. Employers would hire newcomers in their field of expertise for a specific period of time during which the immigrant could upgrade his/her education while gaining valuable work experience.

- The need for providing prospective immigrants with a more realistic picture of work life in Canada is a consistent theme.

Many who wrote in feel that more should be done to assess people's skills prior to their immigrating. For example, a Toronto group suggests uniform skills testing done by Canadian embassies abroad. Practical information regarding job opportunities would then be provided to prospective immigrants and would also foster realistic expectations about the Canadian labour market.

In this regard the working group suggests that

*"...community and government experts, as well as educators and professional groups, should ... coordinate the production and distribution of relevant and up-to-date information"*

that will give prospective immigrants a realistic picture of the opportunities they will have and the challenges they will face in Canada.

- The working group concludes that employment and personal services, including language training, need to be harmonized. They suggest the establishment of

*"...a clearing house to facilitate networking among partners in the area of employment and settlement services...to provide information*

*on services and best program practices and to pilot innovative projects with a client-centred, comprehensive approach."*

- At the Winnipeg public meeting, a teacher of English as a Second Language asserted that existing programs do not address the special needs of some immigrants, for example, the elderly, live-in caregivers and women.

The working group agrees that more coordination among immigrant serving agencies and the various levels of government is required to address the particular needs of such individuals.
- To make better use of the skills that are coming into the country, a Saskatchewan organization suggests that

*"... federal and provincial governments work with community groups to develop a structure by which refugees with particular skills and particular needs can be welcomed into communities which need these skills and can support families who have extra challenges."*

## B. Integrating immigration policies with public service policies

- Almost everyone agrees that increased coordination between all levels of government and non-government organizations is required to improve services.
- The working group report and many submissions advocate greater municipal involvement in the formulation of immigration policies and programs as they are major service providers.
- Similarly, other groups encourage the federal government to establish mechanisms which would facilitate service coordination in specific program areas. Such mechanisms might include *"formal links with municipalities and other service providers, communication and cooperation at the operational level, ongoing involvement with...immigrant serving organizations, and tapping into already existing educational groupings..."*
- With respect to health care, many people feel that immigrants and refugees should not have access to Canada's health care program. Others advocate limited health coverage. The working group on this issue recommends, *"... a health care system that is accessible to newcomers..."*.

- Governments should encourage the development of partnerships between mainstream and community health centres and immigrant settlement agencies, suggests the working group. As a result, the medical community could better equip itself to deal with a changing population.
- A police constable at the Halifax public meeting voiced the view of many, including those in the working group, when he said that immigrants need to be better informed about Canadian laws prior to their arrival in Canada. The feeling is that this would improve relations between the police and the immigrant population.
- Many people who participated in the consultations expressed concern at the development of "ghettos", especially in highly urbanized areas. While many view this as detrimental, some view the existence of a Chinatown, a Little Italy and other such districts as positive, provided that the inhabitants live there because they want to, and not because of a lack of affordable housing.
- A recurring theme in the working group report on this issue as well as a number of other participants is that providers of public services whether they be housing authorities, police, health providers, educators or municipal officials, need cross-cultural and anti-racism training.

At a town meeting held in Newfoundland, it was suggested that, *"Newcomers receive cross-cultural training that will enhance adjustment into the host community."*

- Another common view is that *"a few communities bear a disproportionate cost of integration."* As an example, many submissions argue that due to the overwhelming needs of both immigrant children and adults for language training, the education system is *"under seige"*. A number also argue that as result of this burden to the school systems, many Canadian-born children must forego their regular school curriculum.
- Emerging out of all the study circles was the sense that the Department has lost control of immigration, and that immigration levels must be set in accordance with some proof that the Department can coordinate the process, including integration.

## ISSUE 7 - PROTECTING CANADIAN SOCIETY

We asked, "**How should we enforce and maintain the integrity of the immigration program?**"

The information received on this issue can be divided into three subjects: protecting the health, safety and institutions of Canadians.

Again the views, opinions and recommendations of Canadians vary as to how to better protect the health and safety of Canadians and Canadian institutions. For example, while some argue that the government should more strictly and visibly enforce the laws of immigration to help create a safe and positive environment for Canadians and immigrants alike, others assert that the Department should present a more balanced picture of its activities and clients by decreasing emphasis on its control and enforcement activities. The following two submission excerpts illustrate this divergence"

*"...(current) enforcement procedures are inadequate and are violated daily due to insufficient manpower and/or misguided political influence. Some of the cases described in the newspapers are just too bizarre for words. We must be the laughing stock of the world."*

*"We are always juxtaposing immigrants/refugees and crime, deportation, justice, violence, etc... Immigrants are more obedient to laws than Canadians so why do we blame them? We should be looking at what is wrong in Canadian society, not the immigrant population."*

### A. What about health and immigration?

- To quote the consultation tabloid, "Canada and Immigration: Facts and Issues", one of the objectives of control and enforcement is, *"...to prevent the admission of people who may be harmful to...the health... of Canadians."*
- *"Good health"* is one quality that many recommend be included in the selection criteria.

Many people are concerned about the health of immigrants and refugees entering the country. For the most part they want assurances that they do not carry illnesses which may affect Canadians and, in particular, Canadian children.

- The issue of HIV testing was raised at four of the public meetings and in many submissions. For the most part, people feel that persons infected with HIV should not be admitted to Canada and advocate mandatory testing prior to admission. As one submission from Alberta states

*"AIDS is a real health threat in all countries of the world... In the future, the threat of AIDS may become a key factor in the decision to migrate. Immigration policies and procedures will have to be attuned to the issue of AIDS and be able to respond to the changing global situation."*

- At the Toronto public meeting, however, it was suggested that mandatory testing is a waste of resources. It was argued that if people are tested for HIV, screening must be conducted with respect to all chronic diseases. In fact some submissions suggest just that.

The majority of persons recently polled by a private association favour, *"...complete medical examinations before immigrants are given permanent resident status."*

- On the other hand, some argue that the *"the medically inadmissible class is too restrictive."* It is unfair to delay granting permanent resident status to an entire family because of the illness or condition of one member of that family. Others, including some of the participants of the national conference, assert that the financial reasoning of medical inadmissibility is flawed in that there is *"no consideration of the productive value of the applicant that could counter-balance the health care costs."*

One submission is particularly critical of the current policy:

*"...the medical inadmissibility criterion has been applied capriciously and discriminatorily in the past... Exclusions are made, not on the basis of how much health care support the applicant actually requires at the time of the application, but on how much he might cost in the future on the basis of a whole series of assumptions which might not be valid in a particular case."*

The barriers that individuals with disabilities face when trying to immigrate to Canada are also criticized. Despite being included in the class of individuals who are deemed to be inadmissible, these individuals are often allowed to enter Canada once it is determined that they will not likely cause excessive demands on health or social services. This process is usually very lengthy and time consuming.

## B. How can the safety of Canadians be protected?

- There are some people who draw a direct link between immigration and crime levels in Canada, while others feel that this link has been blown out of proportion.
- People's comments and proposals on this issue can be divided into two categories: (a) control measures that are undertaken prior to a refugee claimant or an immigrant's arrival, and (b) enforcement measures applicable to persons who are in Canada.

### (a) Control measures

- A common opinion expressed both in written submissions and during other consultation activities is that prospective immigrants must be informed about Canadian laws and values. If people are more aware of the laws, they may be less likely to break them, thereby reducing the need for future enforcement action.

With specific relation to refugees, the working group examining issue #7 concludes that Canada should be more aggressive in providing information overseas about Canadian laws and conditions. In particular, the report asserts that Immigration officials should "target" certain groups and clearly communicate the possible realities of life in Canada, i.e. economic hardship, housing and welfare problems.

- Careful screening overseas, to protect the public from criminal activity and health risks is strongly called for. It is argued that the rigorous implementation of the rules and control procedures will prevent abuse of the system and ensure the fair treatment of all applicants. Global cooperation is also a recurring theme in terms of our screening activities. One group suggests that

*"...our government seek to build bridges with nations from which people are emigrating to Canada in order to prevent abuse of Canada's immigration system, and that Canada impose sanctions against countries who fail to cooperate in providing records and information concerning immigrant applicants or refugees."*

In order to conduct proper screening, one contributor suggests the creation of, "one common database" incorporating criminal, security and immigration information that is accessible to both overseas and domestic personnel.

Better control at the front end is seen as more cost effective than undertaking enforcement measures after people have been admitted to Canada.

- One specific suggestion is to make visas mandatory for any non-citizen wishing to enter Canada.

With respect to sanctions, the working group's opinion is that there would be less need for sanctions if immigration programs were delivered more effectively and efficiently.

- Others suggest that airlines may be more careful regarding improperly documented individuals who claim refugee status in Canada, if they are held financially responsible for the maintenance and well-being of these people while the claims are being processed, and for removal costs should that be the outcome.

On this the working group wrote that the sanctions imposed on carriers must be *"refined"*.

- Some feel that a review of the security screening questions is required. There is a perception that persons who should not be admitted to Canada for security or criminal reasons often escape notice simply because they are not asked the right question(s).
- The report submitted by a post abroad criticizes that

*"There is no legal requirement for prospective immigrants to submit their applications at the processing post nearest to their residence,"*, therefore, *"there is no impediment for...visa post shoppers,"* increasing the opportunity for fraudulent activity.

- At the public meeting in Winnipeg, a speaker commented that control and enforcement measures counteract the refugee program. He asserts that the shortfalls are attributable to *"indiscriminate control and enforcement measures abroad, particularly carrier sanctions, visa requirements, and document controls."*

The working group closely examined this issue and concludes that, if Canada is to stop people from entering Canada, there must be mechanisms to process the asylum claims of persons who are denied entry. One suggested mechanism is a process whereby persons seeking asylum would have easier access to Canadian visa officials. The procedures used in determining claims would be similar to those currently used in the in-land refugee status determination system.

Another suggested means of improving control without hampering Canada's humanitarian efforts is for the UNHCR to independently conduct refugee determination abroad. Each participating country would agree to accept their share (likely a pre-determined percentage) of the refugees identified by this body.

In its discussions, working group 3 also recognizes Canada's responsibility for controlling transborder migratory laws. It emphasizes, however, the need for protection-focused safeguards in Canada's control activities for those who may be genuine refugees.

- A submission from Immigration Department officials in Canada suggests the,  
*"creation of data banks containing information on refugee claimants that would be developed and shared by all of the signatories of the Geneva Convention in order to eliminate multiple claims by the same persons."*
- Many persons complain about the difficulty their friends and relatives are having in obtaining visitors visas. Some accuse immigration officials of being overly suspicious in thinking that everyone applying for a visitor's visa is secretly seeking to come to Canada to reside permanently.

Others suggest that this problem might be solved by requiring the person(s) hosting the visitor(s) to guarantee coverage of any costs associated to the visitor's stay (e.g. medical costs, legal costs if the person claims refugee status).

An overseas post suggests that, prior to departing their country of origin, visitors be asked to sign statutory declarations indicating they will not make a refugee claim in Canada.

Others suggest that the person hosting the visitor should post an assurance bond.

## (b) Enforcement Measures

- There are strong calls for the government to fully enforce the laws and regulations currently in place and to place adequate and appropriate emphasis on eliminating criminal elements and reducing delays in removing immigrants and refugees who are convicted of serious crimes. As one submission simply states, *"without enforcement, there is no incentive not to break the law."*

Another submission from Oshawa, Ontario asserts that

*"A number of immigrants and refugees, with the assistance of the immigration support industry, seem to find ways to abuse our systems and our sense of fairness and justice. The ease with which criminals enter our country, the difficulty we seem to have in deporting criminals, the seemingly endless appeals available to criminals, the ease with which they get back out on the street, all combine to give the perception that our immigration and refugee system is out of control."*

- The majority of enforcement related comments deal with deportation.

Many written submissions from both the public and immigration staff call for the execution of removal orders as soon as they are declared.

As to who should be deported, here are some of the suggestions:

- any non-citizen involved in criminal activity;
- anyone convicted of a crime within their first three years in Canada;
- persons dependent on public assistance where sponsorship has been withdrawn;
- persons found not to be refugees; and,
- any immigrant who claims social benefits within their first three years in Canada.

Some suggestions with respect to who should not be deported include:

- children, if it means separating them from their families;
- non-citizens who have committed crimes, but who have spent their formative years in Canada; and,
- where sponsorship has been withdrawn, (especially in cases in cases of spousal abuse where the sponsor may use this as a threat).

- Although strengthened enforcement and deportation measures are urged, many study circle participants acknowledge the complexities of effective controls.

As a Calgary participant remarks, "*Planes that fly out (with deportees) can also fly back.*"

- The working group discussed whether Canada should establish priorities for removals, e.g. target serious criminals. While some in the group feel it might be

*"...preferable to send a message that Canada is concentrating on deporting certain categories,"*

others believe

*"...that beyond defined refugee and humanitarian and compassionate entitlements, Canada could not afford to allow any one deportable group to remain."*

- Many people express concern with deportation quotas and suggest that they be abolished. As one person puts it, "*...some mechanism other than numerical targets needs to be designed to measure enforcement activities.*"
- One submission recommends that resources be concentrated on executing deportation orders until the existing backlog is eliminated.
- Several people at both the public meetings and in submissions recommend that, when it is necessary to drug persons who are being removed for their protection and that of the officials accompanying them, greater care should be taken. Others feel that the practice should be discontinued altogether.
- In order to increase control over persons who have been deported, one submission from an overseas post suggests that persons who are deported should be required to report to the closest Canadian post within 30 days of returning to their country.
- Numerous measures to control the immigrant and refugee populations within Canada are suggested.

*"Fingerprint all immigrants" and "use the smart card for control,"* writes an Alberta association. Others suggest the introduction of *"a national identity*

*card", or a "special fibre optic identity card with photo, fingerprints and SIN to be used by immigrants, refugees and refugee claimants when applying for...services."* Others are firmly opposed to identity papers of any kind.

On the other hand, many persons express concern with the issue of fingerprinting. *"Under no circumstances should there be fingerprinting of refugees and immigrants,"* writes a group from Thunder Bay.

- One public submission calls for the publication of the names and photographs of persons ordered deported. Another suggests the creation of an *"Immigrants Most Wanted"* program.
- Immigration officials need to have more latitude and flexibility, suggest both public and staff submissions, as well as people who attended public meetings. The working group writes that *"...enforcement procedures should allow for discretion to operate within defined circumstances."*
- Action should be taken to strip permanent resident status from people who were found to be refugees, but who return to their countries of origin after having completed the refugee determination process, suggests an overseas official as well as a number of public submissions.
- A number of criticisms are levelled at immigration consultants and some suggest that legislation with *"...stiff penalties for those persons found guilty of counselling and transporting illegal immigrants..."* should be enacted.
- Another submission suggests that there be a period of two to three years probation attached to permanent resident status, and that violation of any of the conditions be sufficient grounds for removal.

Similarly, a number of submissions argue that immigrants and refugees should not automatically be afforded the protections under the Charter of Rights and Freedom. These should only be granted upon the acquisition of citizenship and citizenship should only be granted if they have not broken any laws or have not been an undue burden on the social safety net for an extended period of time.

- On the other hand, many participants cautioned against the *"wave of hysteria"* aimed at immigrants and refugees. They call for enforcement measures that *"guard against systemic racism"* and *"fight stereotypes of people from the Third World."*

Participants in the focus group study assert that immigrants are just as law-abiding as Canadian-born persons. Many feel that the "*media have unacceptably profiled some criminals as immigrants.*"

In particular, the participants of the national conference argue there is a need for greater public awareness of the distinction between immigrants and refugees and "*the high levels of determination, ability, intellect and education found among members of both groups.*" They further call for the further education of "*law enforcers about sexism and racism*" and for "*crime prevention and education initiatives.*"

### C. What about protecting Canadian institutions?

- Canada's social programs and our ability to maintain these seem to be the focus of much concern. The general sentiment is that Canada cannot afford the growing burden that current immigration practices are placing upon its social welfare systems. This is illustrated in the following submission excerpt

*"There seem to be many cases where our generosity and openness have been abused. There are many, many instances where criminals claim refugee status, where foreign students should not be in Canada, or illegal immigrants are living in Canada. Lately, in the news there have been reports of illegal immigrants committing crimes or illegal immigrants receiving tax returns or other benefits they are not entitled to."*

- Some advocate that all welfare and other tax funded social benefits (including legal aid) should no longer be available to immigrants (and in some cases refugees). One suggestion is that these costs be assumed by the various ethnic communities, or by sponsoring relatives in the case of family class immigrants.

Others advocate more rigorous counselling and the imposition of terms and conditions on immigrants and refugees with respect to the use of public assistance programs.

- A Montreal contributor feels that what Canadians resent most is "...*Canadian funds subserved as welfare to support ... refugees being diverted abroad by some refugees,*" i.e. that money obtained from Canadian social services is

being sent to relatives in the person's country of origin. He suggests replacing welfare cheques with "*cashable vouchers or payment cards*" which could be presented to service providers. These service providers would then directly bill the government.

- It is evident that people are concerned with the impact that immigration is having upon Canadian values and institutions. This is clearly demonstrated by the following comment from the document submitted by overseas personnel.

*"In the past Canada changed its immigrants. It seems that now immigrants are changing Canada. We need to identify our important institutions whose mission it is to promote the values that have been universally adopted by Canadians."*

## **ISSUE 8 - ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

We asked, "**How can we best realize the economic benefits of immigration?**"

Not all consultations participants are convinced that immigration results in economic benefits. For example, study circle participants treated the reliability of economic and demographic studies with great scepticism, particularly whether data over the past 30 years could accurately measure the costs/benefits of immigration in the last 10 years. Many participants felt that immigration levels should be driven less by economists' speculations and more by the Department's demonstrated capacity to handle the flow.

On the other hand, some are adamant that Canada reaps significant economic benefits from immigration. They see immigration as an important component of a vital and growing economy. For example, a panellist at the Halifax public meeting asserted that, "*...one of the real resources which immigrants bring is their new ideas and fresh approaches to developing business opportunities.*"

A group in New Brunswick adds that the economic benefits of immigration to Canada include

*"...increasing the demand for Canadian goods and services within the country; the augmentation of investment capital; and the introduction of ideas and concepts that broaden the horizons of Canadians and give them and our country a more cosmopolitan and global outlook."*

The working group concluded that there are two ways to maximize the economic benefits of immigration: better selection criteria and programs and reduced program costs.

## A. Selecting immigrants - better criteria and programs

### (a) General

- The working group report emphasizes the importance of selection when it states

*"A program which devotes more resources overseas to front end screening and assessment of applicants including face-to-face interviews, and which examines the integrity of the domestic connection (the company recruiting a foreign worker or the individual sponsoring an immigrant), will provide greater benefits to Canada over the long term."*

- One Newfoundland contributor puts it this way

*"I can see no reason why Canada should not decide to open her boundaries mainly to those people who have in the past made up the most law-abiding and productive part of the population of this country."*

- A university professor argues that

*"...economic migrants are essential if Canada is indeed going to be competitive and be able to create enduring employment in competitive sectors and firms..."*

- Alternatively, while some agree that there may be economic benefit in the selection of immigrants who bring with them certain skills sets and talents, they also argue that we should not presume that those benefits promote the development of an economy. For example, one public submission states

*"Immigrants may use less in social services, pay more in taxes, even create jobs, but these can't be factors considered as part of an immigration policy. These economic benefits are small bonuses, but immigration should not play a role in fostering the development of Canada's economy... Still, capital, skills, education, etc. should be retained as part of criteria of the independent class."*

## (b) Independent immigration

- With respect to the general selection of immigrants, some overseas personnel assert that

*"If immigration policy is to be a tool in fostering economic development, adaptability, in terms of skills, education and language capability, should play a greater role in the selection of immigrants."*

This view is shared by many who participated in the consultations, as well as the working group. The working group goes on to state that selection should not be focused on narrowly-defined needs, but on dynamic individuals who can perform in the modern labour market.

The selection criteria should reflect

*"...those attributes which lead to successful adaptation to the Canadian economy and to increased Canadian productivity."*

with emphasis on criteria such as education, language ability, flexibility, adaptability, age, knowledge of the country and ability to switch from one job to another.

- Many feel that we should stop selecting people on the basis of their specific occupations, and focus instead on their general ability and willingness to become productive members of Canadian society.

The working group and the provinces advocate *"broader occupational groupings and a revised role [for occupation] in the selection process..."*

While some, including the provinces, feel that the "Designated and Open Occupation Lists" are inadequate, others feel that they can be valuable in assessing potential immigrants. It is necessary, however, that the lists are prepared in consultation with provinces and employers and are applied at the proper time in the selection process.

Currently, potential immigrants are given points if their occupations are on these lists. The points are awarded at the beginning of the selection process, long before the immigrant will come to Canada. By that time, the immigrant's occupation may no longer be in demand. The suggestion is that points related to occupation should be awarded nearer to the time when the individual is scheduled to immigrate.

- Participants of one of the workshops at the national conference argue that both the level and selection of immigrants should be tied to a broader economic policy for Canada - a policy that would "*promote job growth in all the regions of the country.*"

#### **(c) Recruiting & Promotion**

- Some working group members assert that selection is not enough and that "*...Canada must become more aggressive in its "recruiting".*"
- The issue 9 working group report indicates that the provinces feel there
 

*"...is a need for better coordination between labour needs and recruitment by Citizenship and Immigration Canada posts abroad.... That the department is not well enough attuned to the realities of the labour market in individual provinces..."*

Many provinces express interest at increasing their involvement in recruitment to ensure their needs are satisfied.

- An overseas official recommends that Canada advertise abroad for skilled persons and send groups of experts out to assess credentials.
- One of the recommendations that came out of the Halifax public meeting was that provinces should follow Newfoundland's example and establish trade development offices overseas "*to actively market for immigration.*" A panellist suggested that provinces could undertake a coordinated approach to recruitment and promotion.

#### **(d) Business immigration**

- The provinces, in their consultations with federal officials, expressed a definite interest in business immigration.
- The provinces, the public and departmental officials all had suggestions for improvements to the business program. Some suggest that the federal government should "*better monitor and scrutinize these investments to ensure that they indeed provide long-term benefits.*" Others commenting on the program feel it has not achieved what it was designed to do and has been the source of much abuse and fraudulent activity.

For others, the business program has been

*"...extremely successful in both creating jobs and bringing much needed risk capital to Canada for new venture and small businesses."*

Some participants of the public meeting in Vancouver suggest that the government allow *"investors and entrepreneurs move between programs after arrival to enhance economic benefits."*

- Many feel that the business program has many benefits over and above job creation within Canada. These include:
  - the creation of opportunities for trade and investment with other countries;
  - the importation of professionals and highly skilled persons with vital international experience; and,
  - international credibility.

Participants of one of the workshops at the national conference recommend increasing the proportion of business class immigrants and suggest that the federal government direct their risk capital to the funding of education.

Some think that the ability to establish international economic connections should be a factor in the selection of economic immigrants.

Others advocate *"lowering the limit on the amount of money required to invest to gain entry to Canada if the immigrant chose to settle in an area of high unemployment."*

- A few recommend that the business program be discontinued as it has not contributed significantly to economic growth.
- A Montreal group expressed concern about *"...the weakening effects on Canadian nationalism that...result from the linkage of immigration to capital assets."*
- Staff from one Canada Immigration Centre submit:

*"...the business immigration program is structured in such a way that needs to be extensively regulated. ...with good selection overseas, terms and conditions would not be necessary."*

- The working group recommends a simplified program that emphasizes a person's commitment and ability.
- In his report, *"A Review of the Business Immigration Program"*, Mendel M. Green, Q.C. advocates that

*"emphasis must be made to encompass all persons who have the intent and ability, and not just business persons with a proven track record in business who will no doubt meet the requirement of the definition. The direction must be broad enough to encompass all*

*persons who have the intent and ability to establish, purchase or make an investment in a commercial venture in Canada."*

Others support a more restricted and closely monitored business program with additional guidance for investors.

- Some people suggest that we acknowledge that the business program is a guise for the sale of visas. They propose that any money received from the sale of visas should be used to reduce the deficit.
- The Mendel M. Green report recommends that

*"...provinces become involved in the immigrant investor program and that the monies obtained thereby be utilized for government infrastructure projects..."*

#### **(e) Foreign workers**

- The working group writes this about foreign workers,

*"Immigration has a valuable role to play in filling immediate vacancies where occupational or skills gaps exist, with qualified foreign workers on a temporary or permanent basis."*

They go on to state that this needs to happen more efficiently than in the past, without jeopardizing the rights and opportunities of Canadians. For example, for each temporary worker hired, companies could promise to train one Canadian.

- People at both the Edmonton and Montreal public meetings commented on what they feel are unnecessary restrictions placed on bringing in temporary

workers to Canada, especially with respect to nannies and care-givers.

On the other hand, some feel that temporary workers should not be admitted when there are so many professionals, both immigrants and Canadians, who cannot practice their professions or even find work in related fields.

- Participants at a meeting held in southern Ontario suggest that foreign workers should be accorded greater concessions. For example, their spouses who are highly educated and employable, should be issued employment visas. The working group also recommended that revisions to the spousal employment policy are needed to allow Canada to benefit from the presence of highly skilled workers.
- The Mendel M. Green report recommends that *"a special category be established for major Canadian businesses to enable them to recruit senior executive personnel and obtain immigrant status for them."*

#### **(f) Foreign students**

- The working group suggests that *"...applications for permanent resident status from within Canada should be facilitated..."* for foreign students whose education was not paid for by their country of origin or through aid. In addition they would have to demonstrate, *"...in the year following completion of their studies that they have Canadian labour market experience, and qualify as an independent immigrant."*

Other contributors to the consultations support this view.

- At a public meeting, an Edmontonian complained about the fact that taxpayers fund education for foreign students who then move to the United States and elsewhere.

#### **(g) Family class**

- The ability of persons admitted under the family class to contribute to the Canadian economy is questioned and debated by many. Some argue that the economic benefits of family class members should not be discounted. Others contend that *"the elements of family reunification are counter-*

*productive to maximum economic benefits because of the higher costs and lower pay-off potential" of this group.*

The working group report, as well as several written submissions, recommend that certain members of the family class be subject to eligibility criteria.

- Many participants of the consultations suggest that sponsors should bear a larger burden of the costs for the maintenance of their sponsored family members.
- The working group recommends that the conditions for sponsorship should be updated to better reflect the reality of today's economy and the level of unemployment.
- As outlined in the section on issue 2, there is a wide range of opinions on how family should be defined and what, if any, criteria should be imposed upon this group.
- Others are of the view that child care services provided by parents and grandparents are important economically as both husband and wife are then free to work outside the home. In addition, some argue that family class immigrants cost less as they already have a support system.

## B. Level and mix - What is the optimum?

- The consultations with the provinces reveal that they are most concerned with "...linking the overall level more closely to integration funding and economic conditions."

Similar concerns are expressed in many of the public submissions as well. In general, there is an unease about the current levels of immigration and a concern that "*the tolerance to change and to further immigration*" in Canada's major urban centres "*is stretched to the limit.*" There are also fears that tensions will escalate.

- "*Targets could be discarded to allow a more flexible approach to immigration*", and "*Standards should not be lowered in order to meet numerical targets*", are opinions expressed by overseas officials.

- Another overseas post asserts that

*"Assisted relative, independent and government supported refugees/humanitarian class applicants should continue to be managed according to established and planned limits while other categories are limited only within the context of annual targets."*

- The working group advocates that the government maintain a stable level of immigration, target a share for the economic component, with the family class as the residual, after allowing for refugees. The overall target level should not be exceeded, but neither should there be an effort to make up any shortfalls by *"infilling"* from oversubscribed classes.

It is pointed out, however, that although the group supports a *"stable level of immigration"* the

*"... standards of admission and the integrity of the program should not be compromised in order to raise immigration levels in the event of a limited supply of qualified economic immigrants. Nor should humanitarian and/or family class levels be increased to meet an arbitrary overall target number."*

- Some of the participants at the national conference express frustration with the fact that immigration levels are set by the federal government, while the provinces and municipalities are responsible for much of the costs associated with integration. They recommend that *"immigration levels should be determined through consultation with the school boards, municipalities, the provinces and the public."* Ideally, they recommend that those levels be tied to a long-term economic strategy and reflect the resources available for integration.
- Some members of the public recommend increasing family class and refugee immigrant levels and admitting business and independent immigrants according to national economic needs.

### C. Immigrant distribution & mobility

- At the Halifax, Winnipeg and Edmonton public meetings, in several submissions and in various other fora, people across Canada expressed concern over the concentration of immigrants in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. There are two reasons cited: the burden placed on these three centres and the lack of development in the rest of Canada.

- In their report on the Halifax public meeting, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) suggests that

*"In Atlantic Canada, increasing the immigrant population may be one of the keys to turning around this region's economy."*
- A panellist at the Winnipeg public meeting said that we need to, "...make the less populated areas of Canada open, exciting and attractive to immigrants."
- Some suggest giving priority to those who are willing to live in smaller centres and rural areas.
- Others suggest restrictions on movement, incentives and recruitment from demographically similar, less urbanized areas.
- If terms and conditions are applied to attract or direct immigrants to other regions of Canada, the working group asserts that they must be "...fair and enforceable."
- Many express concern with imposing terms and conditions that would interfere with a person's right to mobility.
- The provinces and some members of the public feel that overseas officials should do more to promote the various regions of Canada. Improved information about what various regions of the country have to offer, and a marketing plan targeting prospective immigrants are suggested.
- Participants of one of the workshops at the national conference recommend that there should be formalized federal-provincial consultations leading to agreements whereby *"different levels of government would develop joint strategies with the aim of attracting immigrants to smaller, more remote centres."*

## ISSUE 9 - PARTNERSHIPS

We asked, "How do we build partnerships among all levels of government?"

### A. Partnerships within the federal government

- Many staff comment on the department's need to build stronger ties with other departments working in related fields.

One official asserts that partnerships with other enforcement agencies could be more effective, while others are critical about the relationship with Customs and Excise. They feel that because of conflicting priorities, immigration matters are not being adequately handled. Improved cooperation among enforcement agencies is recommended by several participants.
- One of the working groups on issue 6, as well as many of the participants of the national conference, recommend that the Department work more closely with the Human Resources Development Canada to develop training programs for immigrants.
- The working group examining issue 10 advocates a closer working relationship with Statistics Canada.
- A national organization suggests that the Department improve and increase cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), *"...especially in the preparation of educational materials..."*
- Other public submissions concur with these recommendations as is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

*"The coordination among the federal departments is very important. Policies of other departments such as Human Resources Development, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Canadian Heritage have profound effects on the lives of immigrants and refugees."*

### B. Partnerships with provincial governments

- The report resulting from the series of bilateral meetings (working group 9 report) held with the provinces indicates that it was

*"...confirmed that there is a shared federal-provincial interest on a wide range of immigration issues", and , "...a shared belief that cooperation is possible in many areas to achieve a successful and efficient immigration program."*

- The provinces expressed a desire to be consulted more widely on a broader range of immigration issues.
- The working group report identifies federal-provincial agreements as a mechanism to achieve *"...shared ownership and management of the Canadian immigration program..."*

Some people express concern over the increased involvement of the provinces in immigration. A number hold the view that provincial governments should not be involved in immigration issues at all, and that Canada should have one immigration policy to be applied uniformly across Canada.

A few advocate cancellation of provincial agreements such as the Canada/Quebec Accord as the *"...federal government should maintain ultimate control over immigration."* Alternatively, some participants at the

national conference recommend the Accord be used as a model for other regions of the country who wish to negotiate agreements with the federal government.

A staff submission acknowledges that areas of overlapping jurisdictions require clear legal agreements. It asserts that, despite some duplication, the existing Canada/Quebec Accord works relatively well.

- Many people feel that the provinces must have a strong voice in determining immigration policy and levels. Some suggest that a province should be able to *"...dictate the demographic balance that it wants to maintain and ... have the power to deport criminal immigrants."*
- One submission proposes a *"Consultative Council"* composed of the Federal Minister and his provincial counterparts.

Another suggests that, *"Each province should have a federal office made up of both federal and provincial employees to handle immigration issues."*

- The provinces identify funding as an area which would benefit greatly from federal-provincial cooperation. Beyond eliminating overlap and duplication in programs, they agree with the federal government that innovative and alternative financing avenues need to be explored.
- Also with respect to funding, most agree and recommend that the provincial funding must be fairly distributed in accordance with the percentage of immigrants that each province receives.

### C. Partnerships with other levels of government

- Many of those who participated in the consultations, including some of the delegates at the national conference, feel that cities and municipalities as well as the provinces should be involved to a much greater degree in immigration as they provide vital services to the immigrant population.
- An Ottawa study circle participant put it this way, *"Immigration hits people where they live."* Many participants want the federal government to deal directly with communities, and not exclusively with the provinces.
- When the provinces were consulted on this matter, the most common view expressed was that

*"...the provinces should be considered intermediaries and charged with managing consultations with third parties, particularly municipalities."*

- Working group 10 advocates working much more closely with municipalities and their various service components to improve information collection and sharing.
- Funding for municipalities was an issue that was uppermost in the minds of many. One submission states:

*"Community development programs as a means to empowerment of communities and of individuals should receive more attention and more funding..."*

Another suggests that

*"Municipalities should be funded to assist in providing family counselling, welcoming and orientation sessions in the community."*

## D. Partnerships outside government

- Most people agree that there is a great need and numerous opportunities for all levels of government to promote and foster partnerships with non-government organizations. Regardless of the issue, contributors identify several areas that would benefit from greater cooperation among all stakeholders, as articulated in the following excerpt from a group submission:

*"The local ethnic communities should also be given the opportunity to be involved (in the decision making processes) in the settlement of immigrants, the socio-economic development of their respective regions, networking with other regions, and improving international trade, commerce and tourism."*

- Working group 3 also stresses the importance of partnerships, particularly with non-governmental and community organizations in dealing with refugees, and suggests that a joint forum be established for such groups and government officials to consider issues of common concern.

## ISSUE 10 - RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

We asked, **"How do we build a common database on immigration to serve public policy and program goals?"**

### A. Informing the public about immigration

- In all of the consultation activities people have identified both the desire and the need to enhance the public's knowledge and understanding about immigration.

*"Canadians must be educated on the advantages of immigration and of the realities of issues...." writes an Ontario organization. "The government must take a lead responsibility in developing a new rhetoric on immigration that is... realistic."*

Study circle participants regarded "getting a handle" on immigration data as a major priority. Sharing the information and the decision-making with the public was seen as equally important. A Toronto participant summed it up for a lot of people by saying, *"We want more information, more say, more often."*

Clearly there is a level of suspicion and cynicism with respect to the information that the government provides to the public on immigration. One group writing about the information used with respect to one of the discussion items in the consultation tabloid states that *"...the information on this issue was slanted..."* Similar scepticism was displayed regarding information on immigration and criminality.

A parallel frustration is expressed by immigration officials who feel that through the media, the public is not always provided with accurate information.

In this regard the working group looking at this issue concludes that

*"...it is critical...that every attempt is made to ensure straightforward, easily understood, objective and impartial reports of statistical analysis are made available..."*

to both the public and the media.

- A public submission further asks that

*"The new immigration policy must include a coordinated system whereby information about the Department, policies, programs and services is easily and directly accessed by the public."*

- Many recommend that immigration success stories be publicized to a greater extent. One groups submission urges the government to *"provide more information on the social and economic benefits of immigration."*

## B. What about other uses for immigration data?

### (a) Policy formulation

- During the bilateral meetings with the provinces it was agreed that the sharing of information and research is *"... a clear priority for federal-provincial cooperation, given its importance in supporting policy making."*

- The working group on issue 10 recognizes that federal and provincial policy makers require ready access to current information to develop both short and long-term policies.
- As a starting point, the working group recommends a federal-provincial meeting to determine the degree to which governments are willing to commit resources for improving information collection, sharing and distribution. The desired result is the establishment of a "*federal provincial group*" to deal with all of the issues related to data collection for policy development at both levels of government.

#### **(b) Service provision**

- A Saskatchewan organization suggests the establishment of a national computer network which gathers all of the data on the services provided/received by each immigrant to assist in analyzing immigrant needs.
- "*Clear information on who adapts well would assist in future selection*", assert immigration staff. "*This information should be shared by all those affected by the immigration program.*"
- The working group concludes that service providers need current information to assess the existing use of services and plan for future service needs. Involving service providers in discussions on the collection and use of data is seen as critical for two reasons. First, to ensure that the proper information is being collected. Second,
 

*"...to ensure the need for more data on immigration is balanced with the need to respect privacy, confidentiality, and sensitivity to the fears and concerns of the immigrant and refugee population."*
- The provinces have identified a need for improved information with respect to the mobility of immigrants to allow provinces and municipalities to more effectively deal with interprovincial migration issues, including the development of strategies for retaining immigrants.
- Officials at an overseas post, as well as a few submissions from the public, suggest that linking the immigration data base with those of service providers, particularly social service departments, could assist in tracking abuse.

### **(c) Enforcement**

- Although not addressed by the working group, many staff submissions and a few public submissions addressed the need for greater use of technology to link databases in achieving the objectives of the enforcement program.
- A number of public submissions talk about database linkages that would assist in detecting illegal activities, such as illegal collection of public assistance.

### **C. What needs to be done?**

- In its report the working group makes additional recommendations regarding what steps can be taken to address the concerns regarding the collection and availability of immigration data. These include:
  - developing an inventory of existing data;
  - harmonizing data sources to enhance compatibility;
  - identifying gaps in the data;
  - improving and broadening consultation on data related issues; and,
  - establishing programs, groups and committees to improve every aspect of information collection and use.

### III. KEY MESSAGES

In listening to and reviewing the recommendations, views and comments of those who participated in the immigration consultations, it is evident that Canadians care deeply about the future of their country. They have spoken earnestly about their vision of the Canada they wish to leave to their children. This vision speaks of a society that is prosperous, yet compassionate and accepting; whose citizens respect differences and individual rights, yet work together in their common values and in the achievement of their common goals; where people live without fear for their personal security; whose citizens have the opportunity to realize their potential, yet recognize their responsibilities and obligations to others; and where institutions, such as the family, are cherished and supported. They also speak of a society that is envied around the world both for its achievements and its humanity.

In the purest sense, the consultation participants have told us that immigration should continue to play a role in the development of that vision of Canada for the future. It is widely accepted that immigration has been a positive force in the building and the shaping of the Canada of present day. Today, however, many Canadians want reassurance that immigration will remain a means of making Canada *better*.

While many Canadians are confident that immigration promotes economic growth and assists us in our endeavour to be internationally competitive, many others question the willingness and the ability of taxpayers to go on paying for the services that newcomers require. They also express concern about the additional burden to Canada's social programs when sponsors do not honour their obligations. For some, these concerns suggest an examination of the current capacity of Canada to absorb newcomers, and a rethinking of the numbers of immigrants Canada should accept. Some suggest a moratorium on immigration, at least until such time that the economic and social climate of the country shows significant improvement.

Other participants are less concerned about how many immigrants are coming than they are about choosing the right people for Canada. That is, choosing people who are able and willing to integrate into Canadian society and contribute to its social and economic well-being. They recommend that our focus and our concern should be the quality, not the quantity of immigrants.

While some Canadians view immigration as an important force in the development and the advancement of a society that is dynamic, vibrant, and tolerant, others are concerned about its impact on our cherished values and traditions. Most Canadians want and, indeed, expect immigrants to fully participate in their new society. Time and time again, they highlight the need for immigrants to have a realistic understanding of life in Canada prior to their arrival, and that they

are made fully aware of what is expected of them in Canadian society. On the other hand, there is also a call for the federal government to clearly articulate the obligations of Canada and Canadians to newcomers.

Canadians also express pride in their country's international reputation as a compassionate and caring nation. While most indicate a will to preserve this humanitarian tradition and to continue to offer protection to persons who are persecuted and vulnerable, they also question our ability to do so. Many are also concerned that resources could be put to better use in tackling the root causes of involuntary migration, rather than resettling displaced persons after the fact. Others express concern about the perceptions of abuse in the in-Canada refugee determination process, which have a negative impact on the integrity of the entire humanitarian program.

Similarly, many Canadians are troubled by what are viewed as threats to the integrity of the nation's health care and social assistance programs, as well as the integrity of the immigration program itself. In particular, they are concerned that the generosity of the Canadian people has been taken advantage of. As a result of a few recent and unfortunate incidents related to immigration, many Canadians worry that the immigration systems are not working as they should, particularly as they pertain to the entry of undesirable persons and the removal of those who violate our laws. They, in effect, express a loss of confidence in the ability of immigration to provide protection from those who would pose a risk to the safety of Canadians and/or Canadian institutions.

In addition, many are critical of the immigration programs and processes which they describe as inefficient, unnecessarily lengthy and subject to abuse. This strengthens the general and overriding concern expressed throughout the consultations, that the immigration program is not serving Canadians or newcomers as well as it should.

Finally, Canadians want the federal government to better fulfil its obligations in providing information to the public about the objectives of immigration and its impacts on Canadian society. To that end, there was a call for better information and for action to make information about immigration more readily accessible to all Canadians.

The completion of the consultation process in no way marks an ending to the dialogue with Canadians on the subject of immigration. Rather, the strategic framework will mark the beginning of a continued and broader discussion and exchange of ideas between the government and the citizens of Canada. It signals a new era in participatory citizenship and in the development of a national policy agenda based on open and inclusive decision-making processes. Canada is committed to a new approach to immigration and citizenship, both in the delivery of the program and in the development of policy. It is within this context that we shall continue the discussion of the role of immigration and citizenship in shaping the Canada of the next century.















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